

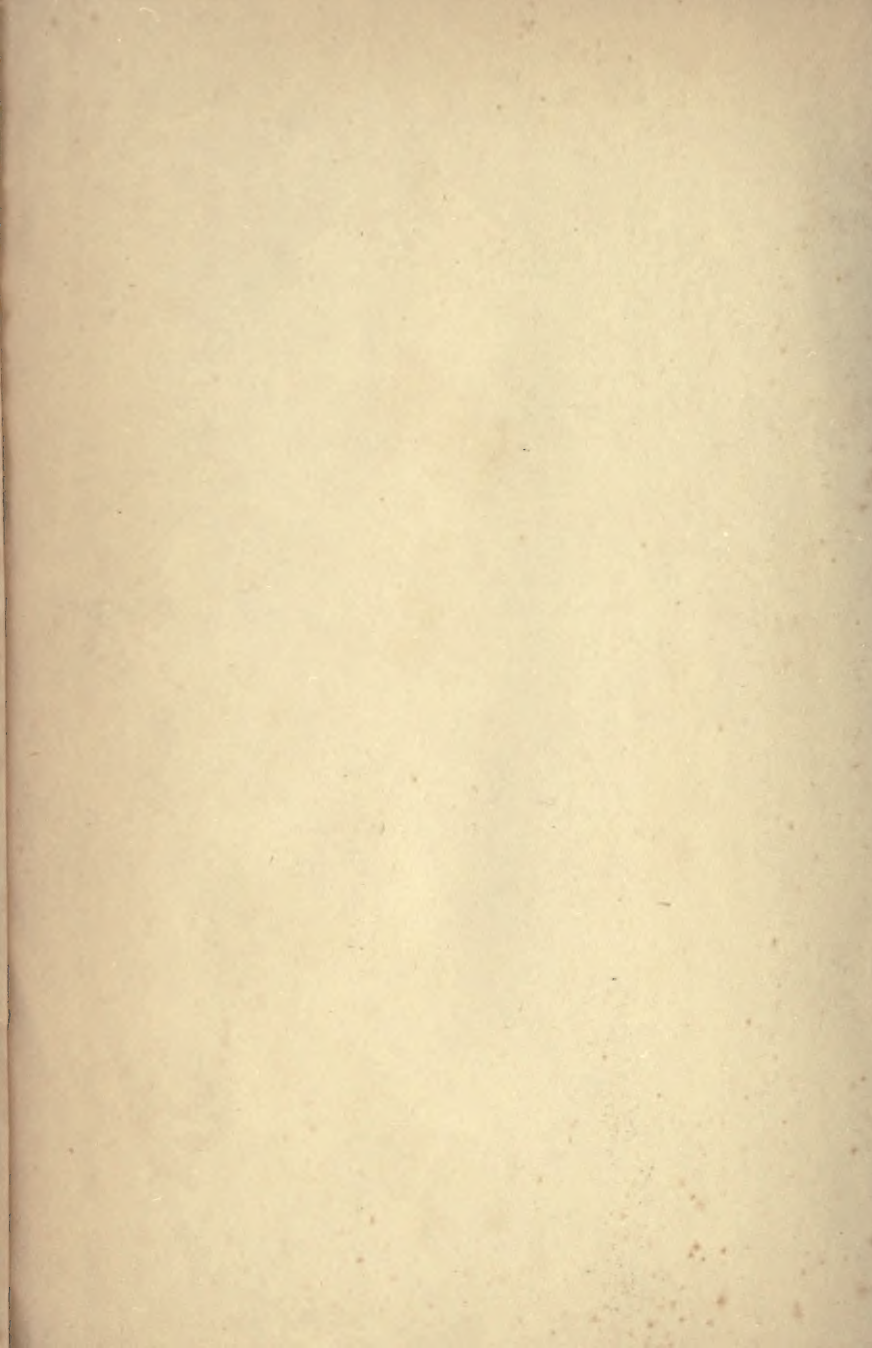
COLLECTED
POEMS




LORD
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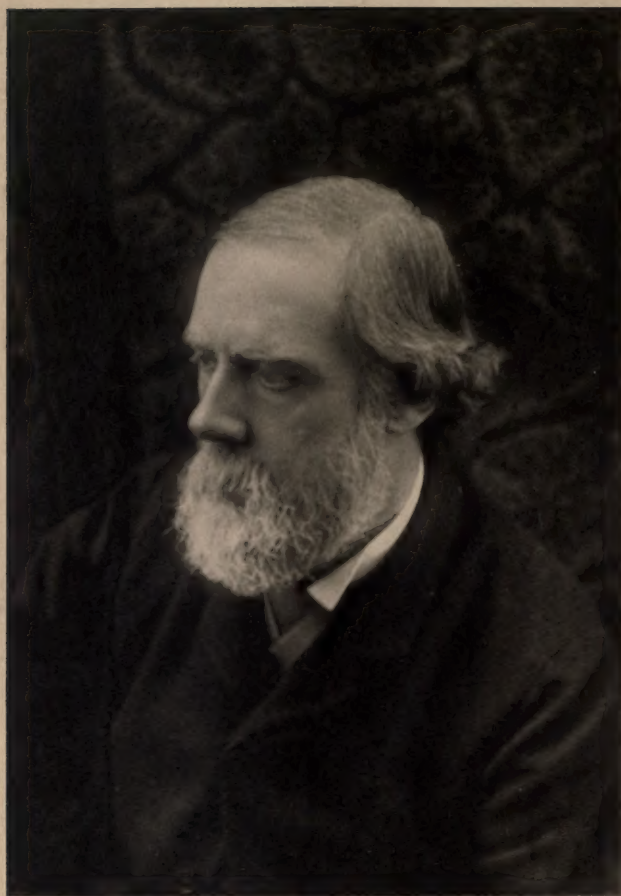


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· POEMS ·
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COLLECTED POEMS

THE ISOLATION OF SELFISH PROSPERITY

To strive is something, yet to win is more.
The crownèd angels from their state declined ;
And traitor pride shall make the nations blind
In days to come as in the days of yore.

To win is something, but content is more.
The brooks, the fountains, and the crystal meres
Are things forbidden in the restless ears
Of Care ; he tastes no beauty in the shore

Hung with the morning, for his dreams are sere :
And, though he seat him on a throne of gold,
He cannot hear the birds sing as of old ;
And all his earlier self is grown a—fear.

His eyes are on the forward region spent :
The past let fools repair, and girls regret,
And first-love dreams leave dotards' eyelids wet ;
Such things are gone. He cares not how they went.

Canker'd with self and his false Mammon-King,
He boasts at large, "I am not as my race,
With me men's petty loves, dreams, ends give place
To high indifference ; hours can never ring

Love changes, matter for a neighbour's sneer,
On my mail'd breast : let boys and girls go whine
The shed rose leaves of passion deem'd divine.
I am not of their weakness, shall I fear?"

SEMELE

AN INVOCATION

COMFORT my heart, thou sweetness, and unveil
 Those orient eyes that wore such tender pale
 Of dawn, that old loves shut their stars and fail :

Dear, if thou holdest all my will in power,
 Mould out the echo of this tremulous hour,
 And make me strong, as thou art sweet in flower,

To crush the wrestling years beneath my knee,
 And fight the crafty future craftily,
 And rest at hours again a child with thee.

Take thy sweet time, invest my blood with warm,
 I sleep on thy word-music, move this charm,
 Nor leave this careful world one sting to harm.

SEMELE

My sense is dull. The tremulous evening glows :
 The weeds of night coast round her lucid edge,
 Yoked under bulks of tributary cloud.
 The leaves are shaken on the forest flowers,
 And silent as the silence of a shrine
 Lies a great power of sunset on the groves.
 Grayly the fingered shadows dwell between
 The reaching chestnut branches. Gray the mask
 Of twilight, and the bleak unmellow speed
 Of blindness on the visage of fresh hills.

My soul is melted in pale aching dreams,
 I feign some nearing issue in new time,
 On which I wait, for which I think and move :
 A haunting drift that guides me by a glimpse
 To lovely things and meteor affluence.
 I wander in my silence, incomplete.
 My lonely feet are dew'd in chilly flowers,
 And I am full of fever and alone—
 The cup without its acorn, the brook bed

Dry of its stream, the chalice ebb'd of wine,
The deep night listening for its rising morn,
The drougthy plain that sees the rain-cloud pause,
And hears the falling drift sing towards its breast.

The voice of dreams is sweet upon my brain,
Has fed me on thin comfort many a day,
Since all my mind was tender, and a child
Rich in the girlish impulse of ripe dreams
I threw my song upon the wind, or pored
On all this glorious nature and its blaze
Ineffable, enormous. I could guess
The thriving summer toward, as the globe
That metes the still year's process, and the edge
Of March-days sweetened in warm April's tread—
Levied the wavering clouds to do him praise,
And all their folds were bright against his head.
I pondered out the wonder-veiling years,
And still I dwelt on light in all my dreams,
Some strange great yearning : dim on forest-waves
The large eye-blinding radiance sheeted out,
And withered up the film of hooded peaks
To set their dinted vales with faltering fires :
As cloudy hollows claspt in buoyant green
Took savour of wood-incense from the drench
Of lime-boughs limp with perfume-searching rains,—
Methought at times the wildered spirit paused
In blindness on an edge of glory, faint
And trembling. Milky shiverings of cloud
Crept in meridian smoothly towards a sea
Where evening held in bright her western bars,
And all the full blue level glow'd again
Under a glowing sky.

I speak my soul
With words and signs and symbols of weak sound.
I cannot clasp the meaning as it lies,
I cannot blend with shallow speech my dream.
I, reeling from the level of my brain,
Would mix with flowery essence, or exchange
Life with an amaranth, so look heaven in face
A summer thro', and draw the zenith dew
Drizzled between the twilights, ere the streak
Of morning touch celestial thro' the halls
Of Nature, with the echo of a bird,
A startled leaflet, and an opening flower.

SAUL

And thus I read the sacred loveliness
 Of Heaven's clear face, unseen as stars by day,
 But there no less tho' weak eyes reach them not—
 Till on the vagueness of thin thought there came
 Substantial impress : on the dreamy mist
 A presence and a deity behind
 Concentred yet pervasive. Silent eyes
 Gave greeting, and, in wordless promise, sign
 Of imminent revealment, and great lights,
 Deep harmony and thunders, as the voice
 Of breakers breaking on low-margin'd seas.

Thou all-enfolding ether, thou clear God,
 Shall I profane thy fair immensity,
 Or bound thy boundless essence in a name
 Spoken as men can speak it between lips
 That tell but half their thought, whose thought is weak ?

Thou whom I only guess thro' my desire,
 A far attainment, inmost prophecy,
 An instinct and a voiceless oracle,
 To enter where we would be, and be one ;
 There, face to face, to touch and be complete,
 And shed our craving from us like old leaves
 That grate beside the crowded knots of spring.

Come, thou great bliss, I have been patient long.
 My lonely arms entreat thee from thy state.
 Come, thro' the vaulted blue a burning sun.
 Come, as the night comes, fielded round with stars !
 My soul is throbbing, as a moonless sea,
 Flood out thy rich beams full upon her breast !

SAUL

My son, my son, there is no stir of hope.
 These days are rough, and ere my latest fight
 The graying twilight blinds the morning's eyes.

Deep have I tasted those accursed wells
 Of disobedience : deeply wasted rule,
 And made my throne a haven for the deed.
 Come, come, the proudest soul that ever trod

Is pillage merely for some crushing hour,
And that is stored for all. I cannot mend,
And will not shrink. Fear mends not chance or change.
Perchance my doom is ripe and I must fall.
I murmur not, for I have much endur'd,
Nor prosper'd in my sin or in my pride,
But fever'd out my heart from shame to shame :
Shame is as praise where all is set to fall.

I that have dared to tamper with the dead,
To break the ancient prophet from his sleep,
Deliberate in election to foreknow
The drift of evil, and made firm my face
Beyond the scale of horror, to untear
Death and their secrets from the denizens
Of his oblivious city,—shall I shrink
Or bate one inch off purpose till the end?

I stand between the oracles of doom.
The wild wind passes on the cloudy banks
And raises out an interval of light.
This is the day, my soul. This is the day.
Shall I sit down and weep? What help to weep,
What harm to die? Small profit this my rule :
A thing of custom merely that outgrows
The will to move it from us, which removed
There lives beyond no comfort in the light ;
But craving, that in realmless abstinence
Rivets the ache of loss, where loss is gain
To limit old confusions, which of old
Raught from my helm the garland of its praise
And set my face to this perpetual rest.

Could I unlive my trespass, and the doom
Of this day's fight, to tread again the ways
Of earthly custom, taste smooth hope once more,
Be man with men, talk trifles, wake and sleep :
Should I be changed? Small change till I be dead.
What years have grained and ringed into the tree
Falls not for one night's shaking. I am proud,
I cannot take meek eyes and smile upon
My shepherd rival. He or I must cease.
My realm is narrow for a second King.
He prospers as I perish, for his hands
Are strengthened and some demon works me down,
Else had I crushed this stripling at his sheep.

I never sought this ruling curse of rule.
 Who shall convince me that I sought to rule?
 I sinn'd not as I was and sought no higher.
 How then is this my guilt to fail beneath
 Unwilling burden? I have done some wrong,
 But royal trespass this, and such as Kings
 Could only sin. The wrong is theirs that chose.

They huddled on my rule and I was King.
 They cannot twit me with an ounce of fear
 Whenas I led their armies. That at least
 Is something in this waning of my name.
 What else is left? To arm and surely die.
 It shall be done. 'Tis easier passage straight
 Where there is turning none and no retreat.

Perchance the spirit mock'd me to my doom.
 It is a lying spirit from its lord
 Of lies and fire, who steals a holy shape :
 My sick brain cannot sunder false and true—
 Nay, for I heard his voice and heard my doom,
 And he that sleeps at Ramah will not lie.
 Give me thy sword. Philistia, lo I come !
 Glut all your spears upon me. 'Tis more brave
 To wrestle with a certainty of doom
 Than to be still in apathy and die.
 I know the issue. I am set to fall.
 What need to redden eyes with slavish tears?
 I feel the end. I front it and it comes.

MINOS

I HAVE framed my life to ruling, ruling men,
 This is the next prerogative to Zeus,
 Who wears the cope of Kingship over Gods,
 Who metes me out a little lording nook
 Beside his spacious glory for a time,
 Until the tale of years disorb my hand,
 And set a graveward darkness on my brain
 Decreed to earth, and make my voice a dream.
 So thou rule on, no wrinkle in thy crown,
 Zeus, and thy full lips fade not thro' the years.

What is more noble in our cloudy day
Of shift and error than to nourish peace,
And hold the sacred justice of a king
With marble purpose firm from day to year,
Wedding the strength of order to our realm :
Not less the King shall watch and wait he may
Unroot confusion, the blind mole that mines
The seat of princes from their solid stay.

This is my mark of purpose slowly won,
Most slowly : year on year the long years went
And won me something nearer. In firm eyes
I held the wavering beacon. And men came,
My councillors, and laughed against my dreams
Of truth and right. They said the world was young,
Too young to cramp her legs by shackled rule,
And crush out man's fierce nature by the square.
To portion with one justice friend and slave,
Amercing equal penalties between
The hands that tugged our battles and the hind
Of capture,—strangled empire in its germ ;
This led a flush'd sedition at its heels,
This rent the key-stone arch of policy,
This palsied friendly nerve, this moved the feet
Of rival armies, numb ingratitude,
This made shrewd fighters deal with lazy strokes.

But I nor fail'd nor wander'd from my drift,
And king it still, unseated by the storm,
Calm in the wreck on neighbour thrones, secure
Where others crack'd to core whose root was Wrong.

Obedience, Reason, Discipline, Reserve,
On these I founded empire as strong hills,
That warp not nor are shaken thro' the years.
I slept and waken'd till their seed was grown.
I watch'd them as the Sun doth watch the Sea,
Stretching an arm of glory from the verge
To shield her all the morning of his beams.

Much have I done : that much is but a brand
From that remainder forest which shall fall
Before their sturdy pioneers lead on
Freedom and Justice and the Golden Age.
The white sea glimmers thro' the palace shafts.

My galleys beat to mainland rich in store,
 Rich in the wealth that smooths the lives of men
 And gives them higher natures. Out at sea
 A scarf of air-mist wavers on the moon.
 The torrents hold their music, and I scent
 A riping vintage from the Cretan hills,
 And harvest on illimitable plains.
 My people turn to rest secure of wrong,
 And not one lip but loves me for its sleep.

I have lived to great result, have seen my wish
 Ripen to deed, sole attribute of Gods :
 Gods only choose the means and grasp the end.
 For, as in dreams that on some purpose verge
 We waken ere that purpose, so our ears
 Shall seldom hear the wind among the boughs
 Whose seed was ours.

I am a man with men.
 This is unstable glory. I am old,
 And I, that love my work, must leave my work,
 The eldest moving life between the suns.
 I, that have wrestled doom aside to glance
 An hour upon completion, glance and die.
 The grave has had full patience. Yet I weep
 To leave my solid toil and this fair land
 To weaker keeping. Shall this icy thought
 Comfort my bones, that all my work is wind,
 This Isle a cry of pirates?

O my heart !
 I hunger not this life as fools desire
 A selfish dream of food and sleep and lust.
 I am content. The corner of a mound
 Is room enough, if I could find a hand
 Wherein to trust my sceptre, so to sleep.

A WISP OF EPIC

AND the gray King strode fiercely from the board,
 And wrench'd away and trampled on his crown :
 But she, the princess, arm'd his neck and clung
 With quivering lips and dreamy staring eyes.
 And down the board the level feasters, each

And all, one impulse, rose like that long wave
 When tide-flood takes a river. Vassal peers
 Enring'd their muttering knots ; but, midmost, knelt
 A knight who bled between his shattered mails.

He, reeling from his saddle, sick and blind,
 Scared thro' the courts with missive, blank as death—
 Had burst their feast like Pestilence, and cried
 Their frontier army broken, back and edge,
 In ambush : all its bravest mown away :
 And, woe the while, their prince—the rumour gave
 Lost in the trammell'd tangle of the slain,
 Or wounded—yet unfound—but likelier slain.

So all that night the gray King and his child
 Clomb a high chamber o'er the woods, and watch'd
 That way their army went by mountains based
 In shelves of ilex—went, but when should come ?
 And, ere heaven's stubborn bar and sable screen
 Crumbled in purple chains of sailing shower
 And bared the captive morning in her cell,—
 Their lean hope wasted on the watchers' eyes
 And fled from the impenetrable mask
 Dead, as the new light lingered.

That wan king

Leant to each palm a hoary cheek, and sate,
 His owl-white hairs shed out, his reedy beard
 Held what he wept and thro' its woof each moan
 Trembled in vapour, and his lids were set.
 But she, an eloquent presence of despair,
 Drew, regal, all her height : her lordly eyes,
 Robed in the morning that she sought in vain
 Beyond the casement, rested on the void
 Gazing thro' distance : horn and hoof were dumb
 Between the sightless woods, but darkness held
 Blind as her soul was darkened.

Last, she turned

And found the old King moaning in a trance,
 Not wholly wakeful, drowsy in his pain,
 Mowing and whispering ; and she said,

“ My Liege,

I cannot taste thin morning from the downs.
 A grieving wind is on the troubled cloud,
 But here it comes not thro' the woolly mist.
 A false red dawn hath yonder ridge bestrid
 To cheat the midnight of her dotard hours :

Watch'd morning loiters from the watchers' eyes.
 No throbbing clarion melts against the wall
 Of this cool dark : the gray night round is dumb,
 And ear and eyeball tingle with the strain
 Of void and silence : from the inmost heart
 Of woodland fails all motion : calm the hills
 As flaky tossings frozen in nebulous seas.
 I will not cheat thy comfort that they come."

She shook her accents from her as she stood
 With raised and lucent elbows ; here declined
 Her rich and languid head against her palms ;
 Tight fingers counter-knit behind the black
 And banded hair, convulsive in their close,
 So strained it in her passion and her pain.
 Not less the wild expectance in her eyes
 Refrained their tears, as mute the smooth pure lips
 Tighten'd in restless workings on the pearl,
 Barrier of their lost music.

So they twain
 Spake nothing, yet in gloom the old King's eyes
 Glitter'd with beaded anguish, for his age
 Was as an infant's with an honest face
 Denying not its weakness : and the nails
 Of his lean fingers grated on his robe
 Crackling the furry velvets, fold on fold,
 And his vein'd wrists were palsied as they strove
 Among the foldings, till his voice came low
 As a weak wind is scared and faint among
 The heavy clusters of primeval woods,
 And crisps but never lifts them till the rain
 Utterly stamp it dead,—

"Dissolve and die,
 My withered brain : the tide is set ; the dust
 Is on my temples. Empire of dumb Sleep,
 Thine I am owed and thine I come. The change
 Is terrorless, my rule a crumbled dream.
 Look in my face, O daughter, search it well,
 I live to speak a blind and horrible word,
 Ay so, as you to hear it : lo ! 'tis said—
 He will return no more and yet no more !
 Why so it is, the silent hand takes all.
 There is no mercy that the flower is fair
 But speedier scythes of ambush. What revenge
 Is there against the inevitable ? Lift
 Thy prophet eyes, usurp the right to see

Harvest of curses on the harmless dead,
The vermin dregs of war's encrimson'd cup
Spilling confusions on our wholesome land—
All in this bitter word 'my son is dead!'"
She moved not as he ended in her calm,
She would not weep, she could not comfort him,
But at her eyes the chamber spun, and fierce,
Fierce as a scathe, the wrestle at her heart
Tightens and throbs, or subtler shudders rive
The disunited, desolated hands
Listless of use and nervelessly disspread ;
At length she labour'd tremulous reply,
Passionate answer, and her lips were pale.

"Die not, great heart, unfinish'd ere thy noon,
Fail not, firm star of glory, from thy seat
Aerial, rapt above our shallow dreams.
So many barren things grow fat and thrive
And taste no evil all their barren days,
That this, our love, can never quench so soon,
Whose course was on the shoreless seas of fame,
His wake one tremulous glory, and full stars
Leapt in the rolling amber at his prow.
Die and we die : our breath is nothing worth ;
We are but shadows moving in Thy will,
Thine intercepted radiance makes us be.
The empire of thy worship is not dead,
But prospers growing rich in fruit and sign."

And now the broad and sunless vapour-downs
Shook their sloped limbs from coiling haze : behind
From cloud to cloud the purple caught, one star
Crept to the void before it : ragged lights
Struck in the crowded peaks and cloudy zones,
And then the full round splendour of the day.

Till there was warning mutter'd thro' the stems
Of storied pines, and trailing drips of yews,
Drench'd moistures of all fragrance, where the sound
Clung deadened as it leapt from armed feet.
They heard it and they started with fierce eyes
Father and maiden as irresolute,
Wearily, scared to face the thing they knew.
Wail was there none, and barely any moan ;
They on each other gazed, touch'd hands, and went
With pause from stair to stair on shivering limbs,

And, issuing thro' the column'd archway, stood,
Pale in great light and paler from its power.
Then from the leaves there wended shield and helm :
It seemed the flower of knights with some great wrong
Concluded, for no power was in their tread ;
But they crept on like walkers from their sleep,
Staring and thronging, knot by knot, they came :
And in the midmost core of that dumb band
A something propt in slumber on a bier,
Or, slumber's sequel, death ; where paced besides
Sorrowful lords in frequency with fixt gaze
Sword-rooted, shapes of still dismay ; not all
The crowded twitters of the tender year,
The moving vapour lights, the tremulous sheaths
Of ardent petals, the glazed under-shades,
The free divine excess of such a morn,
Could lift one careless eyelid, or give pulse
And burnish to their miserable brows.

Fast by the portals of that ancient pile
They laid their burden down, and bared the face
And bared the breast-plate where the spear-head lay
Broken, the truncheon on an inch of stave.
But all the face seem'd noble, for the Knight
Lay with the shadow of an earthly smile
Between his severed lips ; the high brow calm,
And passing calm the frozen cheek of death.

Then the old King cried out and turn'd and sank,
Prone reeling all his bulk across the bier,
And wildly finger'd at the dead man's wound,
Or cherish'd, vainly pleading, the limp hands :
Moaning and whispering out his soul ; and fast
His moving pupils wandered in a gloom
Of eyebrow : Then he bow'd himself and ceased,
Stifled in silence with his wrinkled face
And craving touch yet steadfast on the dead.

But she his daughter in her glistening hair
Moved up and dropt no tears and made to speak,
Bound in the calm that shows excessive pain
Most awful, and her accents faltered not :

“Come ye thus laden from the shock of spears,
Mute faces once heroic, and moist eyes

That coped with fame in the fierce sun and glare
Of danger blenching nothing. Is this all
Ye warrior hands to bring me? Some far time
Shall chronicle upon you full dispraise
Deep, bitter, unforgotten in this word—
'These came unwounded home, but brought their Lord
Dead, and forgot due vengeance for the slain.'
Ye are angry now : 'tis something ; I would hurl
Your recreant footsteps to old fields, and tear
The victory from the victors, as Remorse
Should stand a flaming demon in your rear
Flame-sworded, barring off retreat, till blood
Be paid in kind, and this perpetual shame
Transfigured to a trophied sign, which bays
And myrtle wreath for ever.

I have said

My bitterness : forgive me. Ye are brave :
Your vengeance will not loiter, is most sure.
This is my grief that speaks, and not my heart."

"And now, O brother, thou that hearest not
What love I murmur o'er thee, nor the lips
Which tell it, but, if thou couldst hear, no sense
Could word my inmost sorrow : chilly sleep
Hath bound thee as the lichen clasps the rock ;
Desolate sleep that holds us from the lips
We most desire ; the long hour fades the tree,
But hard when cruel April plays the game
Of autumn in the tender starry green.
Brother, the full deep look of love is thine,
Clouding, and, ere it cloud, the tranquil flower
Shall move above thee to the sun, and cup
Mirrors of dew, and roof about thy head
With whispering undulation. We remain
For lonely winters and our hearth is bare ;
And homeless home is strangered with a shade,
That moves us weeping from familiar doors.

"Pale brow, pale hand, and sweet unlustrous eyes,
Farewell : hereafter, when this memory lives
How once you were, be gentle, my great grief,
Upon the retrospect, let me endure
To tell new days some dwarfish chronicle
Of thy triumphal honour, and hold bright
The burnish of thy deeds in alien times.

Now, once his comrades, raise this fallen length
 Of all we loved, your leader, ere it fade.
 And thou, old King, have comfort and arise,
 Or feign some mock of comfort till this grave
 Close in with rite and ritual of the dead,
 Then—then weep out your measure, frail old eyes.”

She said, and raised her trembling father ; they
 Bent to their burden with no voice and feet
 Of solemn pacing, two on two they wound
 Thro' that domed archway, till the place was void
 And very still, save when a hoarse black bell
 Croak'd out a raven requiem on the slain.

SONNETS

I

THE crocus, snow-drop, primrose, violet,
 Outrun their tardy brethren to foretell
 The icy tyrant's limit, and the swell
 Of buds, the green dilation sudden-set

Between the forest arch an arching net,
 Voiced with the eloquence of secret throats,
 Vocal by long suspense, in tremulous notes
 Calling electric Spring. She, nebulous yet,

Steams up, a sleepy vapour, from the rills
 Soughing their ice like broken glass aside
 Under the warm wind's mouth. Not less her craft

Strives at the heart of frozen loams, and fills
 The pores of nature with her plastic tide
 From the Alp blossom to the miner's shaft.

II

Is it because the summer is so nigh
That thou, crush'd heart, hast caught some mystic glow?
Why, numb in tears, dost thou disdain reply,
Changed from the level empire of thy woe?

As some poor moth with languid creeping wings,
How faded-torn the burnish of thy prime,
How mean thy future yoked with meanest things,
An heir of desolation to all time.

All gentle things with use grow false and sour,
The heart is sour when years the cheek deform,
The wavering planet of the lovers' bower
Burns out the constellation of the storm,—

And yet one year of kindness from those eyes
Would cancel all the wrong time multiplies.

III

WHY should we loiter on this wavering sand,
Training the world at last to hear our will:
Why should we thrust our foreheads to its brand
And kneel and burn our abject incense still,

Serving to rule, dissembling to fulfil?
Let this world-idol grin with idiot shape:
Let the wise crowd, in wrestling fervour shrill,
Pray to the measured shadow of this ape,

And strangle Hope with each accursed prayer.
Then, to their wish, like birds that concourse flows,
One, a spring thrush, the upmost twig has bent
And cracks his heart with piping to the air:

Some, for worm banquet stalk as strutting crows
Behind the furrows of world government.

IV

ROSY delight that changest day by day
From dearest growing to a dearer favour,
Whom Thought and Sinew bondsmen to obey,
Slave out thy least command and may not waver.

My recompense and zenith of reward,
Bourn of all effort, thought behind all thinking,
Regent of sleep and centre of regard
Whereon the wakeful soul will pore unshrinking.

I cannot count the phases of this love,
Measure its growth or vindicate its reason.
I cannot doubt ; the very smile that wove
My soul with love withholds me from love's treason.

I only know thou art my best delight,
Food of sweet thoughts and sum of all things bright.

V

WHEN the day glooms my passion is at rest,
For thou hast nothing of the gloomy hour.
But when the face of day is gaudy dressed,
I trace thee imaged in each summer flower.

I think the earth is glorious, and I know
We twain might pace it under glorious stars :
To miss this crown of joy, my chiefest woe
New rankles sickly thought's half-healing scars.

Is the sky soft, and does the resting sun
Glow from the undercloud till wood and sky
Are glory-mantled ? Am I not alone ?
Let her be near and let the world go by,

Pass on with curious ears, and scornful eyes,
Or listless looks, a cankered heart's disguise.

VI

I LOOK'D across the river for the morn.
The clouds came not, the air was very slow,
Till on the region past an underglow
And scorch'd the glimmering mantle of the dawn.

Then one clear star set in a branch of rose
Drew in before the river of bold light,
Foiling the ragged clouds to left and right,
To sort a crystal lake of raying glows.

I could not rest ; a wilderness of mind
Was strong within me ; love and shame and thought
Of days behind, at that one instant caught
To reason from the mental store-house blind.

Last thou, fair lily head, beyond night's fall
Steep'd in warm sleep, sweet central wish of all !

VII

I QUESTION'D with the amber daffodils,
Sheeting the floors of April, how she fared ;
Where king-cup buds glowed out between the rills
And celandine in wide gold beadlets glared.

By pastured brows and swelling hedge-row bowers
From crumpled leaves the primrose bunches slip,
My hot face roll'd in their faint-scented flowers,
I dreamt her rich cheek rested on my lip.

All weird sensations of the fervent prime
Were like great harmonies, whose touch could move
The glow of gracious impulse : thought and time
Renewing love with life and life with love.

When this old world new-born puts glories on,
I cannot think thou never wilt be won.

VIII

If ever, in the waste of time unborn,
An hour shall come when thou shalt curse our meeting ;
When ruin'd Love in ashes of self-scorn
Smiles a hard smile his own confusion greeting ;

An hour when Faith is broken on the wheel,
And Hope, self-strangled in her own despair,
Sees Memory grinding down with iron heel
The small flower-faces that would spring elsewhere ;

If then, perchance, with dull and altered eyes,
Thou comest to me and sayest " lo thy deed,
The temple thou hast shaken—how it lies
Wasted and bare and broken round with weed "—

Ah, Love—*one* fault was ours, the fault of change ;
The rest is pure ; this poison left us strange.

IX

My heart is vexed with this fantastic fear,—
Had I been born too soon or far away,
Then had I never known thy beauty, dear,
And thou hadst spent on others all thy May.

The idle thought can freeze an idle brain
Faint at imagined loss of such dear prize ;
I pore upon the slender chance again,
That taught me all the meaning of those eyes.

But creeps a whisper with a treason tongue—
Had'st never sunn'd beneath this maiden's glance
Another Love thou hadst as madly sung,
For Love is certain but the loved one chance.

Deject and doubtful thus I forge quaint fear,
But question little, Love, when thou art near.

X

O THOU rich vision, thou hast plunged this day
After thy dreaming upon discontent,
Yearnings that search a rack of dreams, or pray
For clouds, or track sweet music where it went.

For even if she would stoop, as in the dream
Whose sweetness leaves an odour round my brain,
Would I accept the offering, though a beam
Of heaven disclosed to flood my sense again?

Nay; for the close of that tumultuous joy,
Slain with itself, should make me love her less,
Cankering the perfect bloom with mean employ,
Finding a sequel of unworthiness,

In that which cannot taint and cannot sin,
Purer than aught beside this old world in.

XI

SWEET, thou art gone and I must write a word
To tell how I have loved thee, and how clear
The memory of thy presence shall record
Thy dearest eyes thro' many a lapsing year,

The sweetest face that ever maiden wore,
The kind true heart, the nameless sympathy,
Perfect of flaw rich youth in all its store—
Dear little thing, I love thee fixedly.

Fair little form, how precious every fold
Of thy grey dress: each glancing shade how sweet
Of movement, from the ringlet-woof of gold
To those dear steps and tiny-printed feet.

Ah, Love, I love thee so, yet my weak praise
Thinks with full heart, but speaks in old love-lays.

XII

RECORD is nothing, and the hero great
Without it ; the vitality of fame
Is more than monument or fading state
That leaves us but the echo of a name.

Rumour, imperial mistress of the time,
Is slandered where she feigns no specious lies,
Caters no reticence of cringing rhyme,
To blow her dust-cloud full on unborn eyes—

The glory of the shows of gilded shields,
Wild music, fluttering blazons,—and 'tis all.
Lonely the dead men stare on battlefields,—
Can glory reach them now tho' clarions call?

Some shadow of their onset's broken gleam
May yet outlast the pageant and the dream.

XIII

RAISE thro' the tempest thine immortal eyes,
When the sere earth is shaken like a wave ;
When the sick racking trees with anguish sighs
Tear up their spurry fastenings, as they rave,

Branches all wild for aidance. Gird the cloud,
Child of the equinox ! unfold thy wings ;
Thy brows are moist, and thy fierce hands are loud
Snapping the crowns of ancient forest-kings.

The pines upon the pine-ridge crash and slide,
The cataract has caught them, in a smoke
Of rain and mountain-waters : near and wide
The double mountain-voice in terror woke.

Crash on, frail planet, sad for aye to me ;
Sad as my faltering life whirl'd on with thee.

XIV

SHE came, the fire of heaven upon her brow,
And dared not glance upon the face of day
With her meek eyes, as shrinking from the glow
Of this rough world, a maiden pure alway.

And I who held this miracle of shadows,
This pearl of fancy, precious as the dreams
Of angels rested in their violet meadows—
Have known her smiles for lying mirage gleams :

And I who saw no taint in this pure snow
Too white to harbour near the alien ground,
Have touched the surface veil and bared below
The poisoned lees of all dishonour found—

And, trustless where I trusted, flaunt in scorn
For trustful men my broken wings forlorn.

XV

LIVES that are patch'd of trifles have no thread
Of purpose, aimless as the days of birds,
Spending in no prevision deed and words,
Weaklings of chance ; as troops without a head

That pause and fear and vanish, when instead
These same had crush'd the phalanx in its war,
Or torn the bastion'd rampant rock and bar
And forc'd the very cope of hardihead—

The paltriness of lives with no beyond,
Days roll to months and months result in years,
The man no inch the nobler as he nears

His problem's end, that puts him from his bond
With nature, and no reverence on his wane,
His grave forgetful silence or disdain.

THE OLD WARRIOR

XVI

IF in the mental man, as with his growth,
Time alters and repairs with silent feet,
And we are fools of Circumstance the cheat,
Or drugg'd beneath the hemlock wine of Sloth.

We give the fickle years a slavish troth,
Withholding not the soul's stability
Ring'd round and fenced from mutability.
One stream takes all the willing and the loth.

Go, barren plea perpetual to despair ;
Inaction numbs the freshness of the powers,
Leaves the disease and taints the remedy ;

Better to dare and fail than not to dare ;
Rest is unrest that drowns jostling hours,
Poison sweet sleep that lets occasion by.

THE OLD WARRIOR

ONCE more on rock and chasm the gilded eve
Sets into flying lights of pale-rayed fire,
And yet again the retinue of clouds,
Above the sun-fall, veined with rushing gleams,
Drag out their chain of crumbling island crags,
Lovely to all but these my leaden eyes.

The blind and barren life-lamp of my brain
Fails out unkindled at this certain round
Of visible beauty, and I hunger change
Nor earthward find it, if not this slow orb
Divides his rest some hand-breadths to the north,
And crimson icier summits fall by fall.
Thy tune is old, old elm-tree, as the wind
Shakes out thy leafy sails ; hast been my rest
These many changeless years. Perchance thy voice
Shall float between the bells, when I am laid
Beside the kirk-tower yonder in their ranks,
O'er whom the voices of the bells peal prayer,
And rolling organs, yet they will not come.

I am forgotten from the files of war.
At times I fancy that old self of mine
Has faded out and left a nerveless hull.
Ay me, that I am fallen from my praise,
This is the bitter sequel of our time ;
Thus he the human demigod to-day
Shook off, mere bruised lumber, on the next,
Pines out in dreamy memories what has been,
Blurr'd with the silence of the things to come :
An ancient watch-tower that has served its turn,
A rampart on the pathless blasts, a fire
To watch and cheat the shrill waves of their prey,
Now stain'd and patch'd with ruin and disuse,
Rots stagnant in time's shadow stone by stone.
Why should man live declined? the noble years
Perish, and quavering dotage, garrulous,
Unsays his own renown with witless prate,
Self-wounding calumny. The glowing eye
Is faded ; shrunken arms and trembling hands
Unmeet for wars. The measure of his time
Has numb'd his drooping manhood lock'd in calm.

O rusted harness, dost thou speak reproach?
I shall not wear thee, for my veins are slow,
Until thou case my unremembered dust.
Old brand, art shamed with my unsinew'd gripe?
Old gauntlet, spacious for the wasted hand,
'Tis long since maiden fingers touch'd thy palm.
Long, since bright ringlets pillow'd on my mail,
For some deliverance wrought, some dread o'erthrown.

Lo, as a dead and stranger'd thing I rust,
Out-lived into an age I cannot reap,
And sunder'd from the vigour of my time,
Unlink'd from current action and renown.
I see them sometimes, the new blood, fair knights,
Come plumed and spurr'd and glistering down the vale.
I crane from this rock edge with misty eyes ;
Or, when the tilts are toward, down I crawl
As far as yonder road-bend to the town,
My utmost limit ; deemed in age as far
As my youth held the miles to Palestine.

I cheat the grave too long with bloodless days,
Ripe tribute to the pale and iron sleep.
I cheat my weary heirs of heritage,

TOO FAIR TO LAST

Greying their locks and warping all their youth.
 I shall not vex them long. The waste is set
 Before me and the darkness. I shall pass
 Upon it with a firm old heart, and turn
 To nameless sleep undaunted as forgot.
 The accident of record cannot change
 The man to lesser, or contract the soul
 That has been, shadow'd outwardly to men
 In functions and in purposes achieved,
 Tho' crusting years have blurr'd its name away.
 That flash of glory, the majestic deed
 Has still its greatness in oblivion
 Great then, and now, and always. Its reward
 Vital within its doing, self-sustain'd,
 Recks not the voices of the after-years.

TOO FAIR TO LAST

LOVE of love, and light of light,
 Love has limit of delight,
 Dream and dream, sweet child, again,
 Here is no unrest.

Love hath set our moist lips fast,
 Kiss one kiss, the longest last.
 What tho' weeping-ripe, my girl,
 Smile thro' rainy eyes.

Summer from the bough has past,
 And the shreds of autumn cast :
 What, dear heart, if love be low
 Under foot as soon ?

We have had a tender suit,
 Lovely words are breath and mute,
 Still'd with tears in richest noon,
 Gathered to the dead.

Kiss and touch my hand, and part :
 Sighs are farewell of the heart.
 Dream a moment in thy joy,
 Wake a world of years.

A BALLAD

I KNOW not how I loved at all ;
Your presence in surprise
Came on me like a trumpet call,
And in a bright disguise ;

A soldier in a burnish'd sheen
Of scale and listed blue,
With jangling armour and a mien
Of conquest as your due.

The rose of youth upon your face,
My name upon your lips,
The rippling trees, the lonely place,
The sails of harbour ships,

The time and all so fairy-sweet,—
That at each word we did say,
I felt the time for love so meet
That love I gave away.

How fair the trailer's ruddy pride
Blazed out on cottage eaves,
How sweet when all the country-side
Shows like a wood of sheaves.

How dear in middle harvesting
The reaper's roundel clear,
Where shakes the field-lark out its wing
From threaded gossamere.

Sweet fickle Love, you grow for some,
And grip them to their grief,
As sudden as the red-wings come
At the full fall of the leaf.

And sudden as the swallows go
That muster for the sea,
You pass away before we know,
And wounded hearts are we.

'Tis not that, Love, in sentence trim
You reel off loving talk,
When pensive by the river brim
With hand on hand we walk.

A FAREWELL

It is not that you press my arm,
 Or soften voice and eyes,
 Or rivet hand, and glibly warm
 The fervour of your sighs.

Who tells true heart from feigning deep,
 How crafty-wise were he,
 He knows the hill-side sheep from sheep,
 The mountain-bee from bee.

We take on trust, forsooth we must,
 And reckon as we see ;
 But, O my Love, if false thou prove,
 What recks all else to me !

A FAREWELL

OUR love is dust : the rainbow mist is torn :
 The old pulse beats, the old eye sees the true :
 The mirage withers and the sand remains.
 Our love is worn, and strange thy languid lips,
 Thy cold arm burns not on my neck, and smooth
 Those very accents as a frozen marge
 Whereby the dead flower blackens into dust.
 Come, we have loved ; 'tis something : let it pass.
 Shall this endure in man whose breath is change
 To build itself a careless citadel
 Safe in the teeth of years, when all things fail
 Before them ? It is something to enjoy
 And own the power to taste this sweet of change
 Nor curse its fading, faded. I accept
 The limit of the illusion with no tear,
 And, freely gone, I close the door, nor stir
 One beck to lure it backwards.

Strange and sweet

Its coming breathed of distant fields : its voice
 Thro' tremulous meadows with a child's soft hand
 Led where the crowded Iris of their floor
 Burst out in burning spring : a mist, a touch,
 My sense in deep blooms melted out to sleep ;
 And there I dream'd thee lovely and this love

Eternal. Till the windy seeds of hail
Flapt me awake ; I shuddered : a black wind
Search'd bitter clouds for tempest, greenless flats
Whence the last herb had starved in blistering shale,
A jumbled quarry where the very dust
Held frozen-caked in shelf and cups of crag.

Come, we have much to breathe for : deed and days
Have music still, and life yet moves our veins :
And though the garland rose hereafter hang
Dishonoured and dispetalled : if our touch
Be not to any hand, no lip to ours,—
This world will turn although we say farewell.

THE ANSWER

FREE, thou art free, rash changeling of the hour :
Why then farewell, and all at once farewell :
Pass from the hearth of this still breast for aye.
What should I speak ? Thou know'st thyself, and I
Am darken'd by some fuller birth of smiles.
In her sweet hour I dwindle and recede :
There, if some thought of our once love intrude,
Stray dissonance, between the shrine and heart
Of long melodious concords, may it thrill
The honey'd sequel to a richer close.

If this be well that we should greet no more,
Hereafter passing with incurious eyes,
Who held such state of our eternal love,
And deem'd, weak fools, that these our hearts were set
As near as bud to flower, as babe to breast ;
And finish as we finished, fools of change,
To shake asunder meanly, at one touch,
For always, as an angry balsam seed
Leaps from its parent stem on alien winds.

I have had some wrong and I shall shed some tears.
I speak not of myself : let that go by.
We chide not on this melted light that rode
In arrogant pitch, soon overborne : new rays
Quench'd it like mist and all its heaven was bare.

THE WOUNDED KING

Have I the heart to crush this dream and smile,
 Nor let one errant thought's memorial flow
 And shape the stream of what we might have been?
 Have I the soul to shield my soul with scorn,
 Like braggart men, the broken dupes of time,
 Once reaching stars and lords of incident?
 The dark road bends before me where I tread,
 The arm that stay'd my spring, deserts my fall,
 And I am lonely in the leafy winds,
 And very lonely in the wasted year,
 Grinding November wrecks on gusty skies,
 And strengthless save one purpose to begone.

I rail not on the veering tyrant man,
 Ape of all change, whose fierce inabstinence
 Gulps at illusion, as with eager jaw
 The barr'd fish loves the glitter of a rag.
 Who, since most changeful of all breathing things,
 Would rail against the unenduring rocks
 And make their weather'd constancy his own.

Say you we part henceforward, and farewell?
 The dumb slow days teach much and may teach thee.
 Thrive on thy fill and rule the flowering time,
 In stately roses under crowded bloom,
 Wear down the mutinous echo of this wrong!
 I turn, I raise towards fuller heights my eyes,
 Farewell—since thou wilt have it—and farewell!

THE WOUNDED KING

A FRAGMENT

HE rests and moves not with the moving woods.
 The sleet-winds cannot bite him from his dream,
 Nor region thunder tho' it grind the hills
 Command an eyelash tremble. Rest and dream
 More awful than the clench of maniac hands,
 Here in the sweeping hiss that shreds the pines,
 Here by the driven mere's wild suck and foam,
 That sighs in shudder under pendulous lips
 Of turfy rivage, tearing. Not the voice

Of the sweet year moving her buds at noon,
Nor that full fervour of the spring's desire,
Fluttering the foliaged quires, could half unseal
The trancing darkness of those muffled eyes.

Where is that army now, the pageant war,
Whereat the vaulted hills, in cope and crag
Seeming to shake, drew clamour like a fear
On many a chiding echo? Where are these
That seem'd so calm, so strong in their array?

Wide on the downs by wrinkled tarn and edge
Of ghastly moon-light, each in shatter'd mail,
The dead men lie, clench'd hands and earnest eyes,
Out under night, they have forgot their fame.
And fall by fall the mountain crystal sheds
A tainted glimmer on from rill to mere.
The rainy winds flap past and cease again.
The stain'd moon rolls and ceases. Shelterless
The raven screaming reels upon the night.
It seems the sacred dawn should come no more,
No more should clothe the desecrated hills,
Serenest, on their crests with timid haze
Or rosy glory from the secret sun.

Dead are his heroes all, but not their King :
His burning wound yet holds him from the seat
Of heroes and the precincts of their rest.
His soul on shadows of unresting thought
Flits to his bride in anguish—where is she?

There is a palace builded on a mere,
And mere-waves sound about it, sweet or shrill
As lends the season impulse : and old trees
Are sequel to the voices of the waves
Behind it : and beyond it heaven is clomb
Of some aerial glacier, native rest
To pausing thunders when the vale is spread
Trembling in trembling vapour fed with sun.
A nest for ancient kings to take repose
Between the mountains, musing dreams of power.

Her lattice gave across the restless floor
 Of nightly waters paved with faintest gales
 In shaken lines of splendour and sweet gleam.
 The moon was very sweet between the trees.
 The island sedges whisper'd idle dreams,
 And wakeful fountains wrestled deep in flowers.

Whereon she gazed ambrosial from her rest,
 In parted lawns and samite canopies,
 Tangled in moonlight, Danæe-like, a queen.
 There is no guess of sorrow in her eyes,
 As leaning radiant towards the mellow night
 She hears a bugle throb —

THE PRODIGAL

THE scathe of sin is on my brow like lead.
 The draff of swine is on my lips for bread.
 Father, I know thy glory is not dead.
 I will arise.

The servants in thy house are cloth'd and fed
 Full and to spare. I perish here for bread.
 My sin hath cloth'd thy presence with such dread,
 I may not rise.

Mine, mine the guilt, all trespass deep and red :
 Thine, thine the mercy on this fallen head.
 Naked I come, yet thou shalt give me bread.
 I will arise.

PHILOCTETES

SILENCE on silence treads at each low morn.
 Pain and new pain, some glimpse of painless sleep,
 And waking to old anguish and new day :
 Blasted of glory, sundered from my kind :
 My hearth, my realm, the lips that love me, lost :
 So runs it. 'Tis some courage to keep life
 Where life is worthless, and on feeble stay
 To dwell in hope of better till we die.

I hate this island steep, this seam of beach.
This ample desolation of gray rock
Man tills not : and man reaps not, woe is me !
No voices, save stress-landed mariners
Leaning in ring with eyebrow-level wrists
To watch the scummy rack and buzzing waves,
Toss me a word in pity : stare and pass
Grinding a clumsy jest or surly sneer.
Yet in their talk I gather waifs and strays
Of that great Trojan battle how it goes ;
Of beardless youths who gain down heaven with deeds,
And all the noise and turmoil of the thing,
Deed quenching deed, and echo's swollen boast,
While I am rotting here and touch no praise.

Ye have done well to leave me. 'Tis most wise,
And friendly too, expedient, generous :
Why this is bounty's crown ; I have deserved
No less than a sick hound : full thanks for all.
My kings and comrades, ye are wise and brave,
As wise as brave, and brave your chiefest voice
Of foxy Ithaca : 'twas nobly said,
" Pack out the carrion on this leeward Isle.
We need no wounded leaders, no, nor fear.
His men and ships *are* needed ; they sail on :
They cannot heal him, and our need is great."
Why, man, this is true valour and no theft :
I could not quit thee, and kings cannot steal.
But if I meet thy foxship afterdays,
With half an arm to raise and half a spear,
I'll mar that serpent face and false gray smile,
And leave thy surgy rock without a king.

Alas, alas, how mean a thing am I
To rail and threat and bluster like a God.
The old pain trembles thro' me marrow-deep,
A quivering mass of earth, than earth no more,
Earth gifted with a cunning power of pain,
Full knowledge of its fall and loathsomeness,
Craving for enterprize in impotence,
Some little sleep and all the rest a pain—
Shall such a thing have pride or hoard revenge ?

I loathe the glancing sameness of this brine,
Its hissing suck of waves, its equal face.
I loathe the toss of sails, the pass of clouds,
The white wings curving on the tawny rocks,
The evening and the dawning and the day.
We thrive by action, I am chained from all,
And I forget the pleasure of this earth,
Of all but pain and slow time dispossess'd.

Yet is there hope ; slow hope yet comfort sure,
I had forgot it in my wrath and pain.
Is there no oracle? Troy cannot fall.
I guard thine arrows, Heracles divine,
And Troy falls not without them year on year.
I hoard them as the marrow of my bones,
Sweet nurses to revenge. Oh, fate is just.
Ye reap, my kings, wound-harvest and much dead,
Thinn'd troops, and kingdoms waned to wrack at home,
And gloomy faces by a gloomy sea,
And firm-braced Troy before, the sponge of toil,
And all your warring as an idle dream.

I can abide my hour it is so sure,
I lean on this unstumbling oracle,
And nourish hope, till worn with many woes
The haught Kings fall in thinking on the wreck
They left by Lemnos and the archer hand
Once fellowless in Hellas. They shall come,
By Zeus I swear it, they shall come in shame,
And stand in shame before the man they wrong'd
And weeded out as refuse. See, they bend,
Pestilent faces crusted in meek smiles,
And supple eyes and all the fawn of need :
And one mouths out on justice, gratitude,
The cause of Hellas. Then another smooths
My name with praise, and all the worthy ring
Lisp sympathy with dew on glassy cheeks.

Sweet oracle, thou climax of revenge,
I will wear out my painful coil in joy,
Voiceless of all complaining, firm and sure
The Gods are just, and compensation comes.

ALLOWANCE

"WILT thou be true, God's comfort guide thy brain ;
 If false, high grace bereave thine after-rest,
 As sunset anchor'd in the beaming west
 Is over-dulled to leaden taint again."

False is as fate shall choose, not men ordain.
 True, oft untried, where false is vanquish'd truth.
 Cold blood is fixt, where fickle heated youth ;
 Praise one, blame either, or blame both and twain.

Shall one assume the scales and judgment-throne,
 Touching my outward merely with blear eyes,
 Measure the trespass, hug himself for wise,
 Tell me the world demands I should atone !

Grave world of flawless virtue, lift the stone.
 Brave world of mincing honour, dole and deal,
 And fidget shame out with thy mouth of meal,
 But let the polish'd reprobate alone.

A SONG

O FAIREST thou,
 Tearing the silk-leaved blooms in waywardness,
 Thy pretty feet upon the smooth-faced flowers,
 Can I forget
 To crown thee with the worship of a song ?

O fair and sweet,
 Thou movest in thine harmony among
 The lavish spring and all her twinkling bowers,
 Why should I set
 Thy lyric loveliness to harsher song ?

THE ROYAL ASPECTS OF THE EARTH

I

ALONE with nature's breathing things
 We fashion care, or fashion mirth
 In vague desire : some sense of spring's,
 Some royal aspect of the earth,
 Some cloud dissolved in pearly belt
 Above the blue-coned mountain rise,
 Can make the moment's day-dream melt
 In glories of the languid skies.

II

The serene domes of mounting lime,
 The meadow's crest of dædal May,
 And deep-eyed morning ere the time
 Sleeking her curtain clouds away,
 The lightning's glance, her brother's jar,
 The crystal feel of hazy dawn,
 The free bird floating like a star,
 The triple zone in ether drawn—

III

Earth's royal aspects of delight,
 They vary with the varying day,
 From dawn to noon, from noon to night,
 From birth to ripeness and decay.
 The spirit opens largest eyes
 And ponders meanings dim and clear :
 Too vast the mighty garden lies :
 He takes a blossom there and here.

IV

He feels the great world shift and roll
 Thro' change and spaces, night and day :
 And in the orbit of his soul
 He feels a law : he must obey.
 He sees the giant rivers grind
 The weather'd alp-face evermore ;
 Behind him wrecks of hand and mind
 Are lighted by the sun before.

V

He sees the breathing vital whole,
 And province under province set
 In nature, limitless control
 And plastic freedom frëer yet.
 He seeks the import of Before
 To reach the sequel of Again :
 He finds the engine in the ore,
 And reads the river in the main.

VI

He sees creation's boundless plan :
 " Whence cometh and where goeth he ? "
 That riddle heritage of man,
 With fearfulest immensity,
 Dashes in torture his delight :
 He finds no answer any way,
 No answer in the rushing light,
 No answer in the shrine of day.

VII

No constant rule of sun or dark,
 But endless alternation sways
 His little planet : he can mark
 His heart, now like November days
 Now borne on gauzy spirit wing,
 As changeful as the shatter'd grays,
 Where cloudy isles of evening cling
 To take the sun-shape, phase to phase.

VIII

The narrow pleasures of his kind
 Enthral his fancy : not for long :
 The stern reaction of the mind,
 The vast ideal vaguely strong,
 Can make him loathe what pleased before,
 Can shred his flimsy sensual creeds :
 He turns to nature to explore
 The glory of her days and deeds.

IX

He climbs the silent mountain-brow
 To drink the pure light, ere it reach
 The valley : in severest snow
 The peaks are slendered each on each,
 As like a sound the mighty light
 Comes up : and fountain horns of morn
 Shatter in radiant drifts, and bright
 The speary opals branch the dawn.

X

And, nature's old completeness, day
 Sets out upon her order'd track :
 A spirit instinct helms her way
 And steers her into starlight back.
 Erewhile she rose in fire and might,
 And laugh'd to tread with vivid feet
 Among the clouds : from that delight
 She falters now in stormy sleet.

XI

The shadowy process wraps the wolds :
 The purple splendour deepens, there
 The forest quails within the folds
 Of crisp magnetic cloud : and fair
 The eery play of beam and blast
 That tears the pinewood to its core,
 Or calls the torrent surges past
 To shred the frigate on the shore.

XII

Till rolling back its cloudy fear
 The tempest rises like a veil.
 Beyond, the lands are crystal-clear,
 Within is drift of crumbling hail.
 The storm becomes a cloud : no stain
 Left in large azure else ; but new
 And steaming on the sleepy plain
 Lies noon in wreaths of fiery blue.

XIII

The branchy mountains like a crown
 Impend upon the lighted seas :
 The vapour from a latent town
 Strikes up and sharpens by degrees
 Its moulded plumes : a noise of hives
 Meridian-eager from her towers
 Touches the wind, and hardly lives
 Across the languid league of flowers.

XIV

A change : the noon descends to shake
 A veiny glory thro' the leaves :
 The vivid martin strikes the lake :
 The country, like a wood of sheaves,
 Is bordered round the cup-like mere :
 Green-hoary alders near the wheat
 Move their crisp glister : shade and clear
 Shed changes on the water sheet.

XV

Like odorous fire the souging grain
 In one continuous upland swells :
 The splendour tingles on the chain
 Of ridgey mountain citadels :
 Beneath are forests, cloud between,
 And heaved from cloud three silent spires :
 Rose-clouded belt on belt is seen,
 A pavement pierced with starting fires.

XVI

The west lies crimson'd thro' and thro' :
 The echo-warmth about the east
 Flush'd up to meet it : till the blue
 Of Zenith, even to the least
 Of every cloudy gauzy wreath,
 That flakes and shores the utmost deep,
 Becomes a tender rose to breathe
 New colour on from steep to steep.

XVII

The rival of the evening star,
 One cloudlet burns on ether pale.
 Hear in the windless coppice far
 The ring-dove's five-divided wail.
 The lamb bleats low in mountain fold :
 And, mellowing all the forest ground,
 The sun-globe half is radiate gold,
 And half a rayless vapour-round.

XVIII

Or when the enormous void appears,
 Where autumn midnight brightens fast
 The torches of her myriad spheres,
 Colossal planets of the vast,
 Slow moons and moony satellite,
 Dense seeds of dimmer worlds in air,
 The meteors churning thro' the height,
 To take their lofty pastime there.

XIX

So noon and shade, and day and night,
 Abashed by heaven and earth and sea,
 Man wonders that a thing so light,
 Weak, vain, and shorn of strength, as he,
 Should come to know himself and think ;
 And, gaining on the brute a throne,
 Ascend to God the nearest link,
 And reap the mighty world alone.

XX

The trivial brook, that barely wets
 Her pebbles, types not less the voice
 Of something in himself than jets
 Of roaring steam and arctic ice.
 He sees himself in soughing woods,
 He hears himself on winds that pass,
 And nature in her myriad moods
 Reflects his fancies as a glass.

IPHIGENEIA

ARTEMIS, *Artemis, she loves my blood,*
Comes like a great snake folding round my life,
Crushes and kills and takes sweet meal of blood :
Palsies the victim with her quiet eyes
Inexorably bright, draws on, and grasps ;
It can but quiver feebly, so complete
Her masterdom that not one choking wail
Wrestles away the thing that lived, and dared
Be happy, ere she came and crushed it out :
Forsooth its smile displeased her, that was all.

Passionless snake of heaven, who never loved,
And must be cruel since she never loved,
Chaste only as her temple image is
Because it cannot feel and cannot err.
She will not even share with other God
Her meal of vengeance : and her altar stands
Alone in loamy Aulis by the shore,
Lest certain drops of slaughter should enrich
Another precinct with the spilth and rills
Of her sweet vintage, nay her lips crave all.

Artemis, Artemis, cold sliding moon,
Treadest along the withered forest tops,
When all the Gods are sleeping else in heaven ;
And every noisome creature at thy ray
Crawls out for blood and scents his meat with joy,
And men do all they dare not in the sun.

The tides are thine an evil arbitress
To rear Poseidon up against sea-mounds,
And crack them, rending inland harvest down.
Thou bindest sullen calm against the gray
And steamy ocean, even as now, until
Thy gentle priests assuage thy mild desire
And climb the shamle-altar ; then at last
The ripple bears a head from eastern cloud,
And the long floor curls out its many vales—
A God, and yet so cruel ? Thou art none.

The wrath of Hellas waits without a wind.
A virgin life is little to ensure
The waftage of her bravest bravely borne
To their revenge : what marvel I must die ?
And yet the pity and the fear of this,
To wither in the emphasis and bud
Of ripe sensation ; at the very door
Of life's new splendour like a shade to stand
Dazed with the lights, and see the guests within,
And scent the saffron from their stately robes,
Then sink back wailing on the utter dark.

How wonderful to cease when all this world
Goes on without us, feeding, loving, buying,
When I, now large at heart as these that move,
Shall be most still and nothing in my change.
The world in its fresh blood is all awake,
And I in urn a cinder of myself ;
The age-dried crone then nearer love than I
That move not with the story of the earth,
Nor feel of day the soft light on my eyes,
Nor the sweet motion of the lavish air,
Nor human love, the stolen spark of heaven.

New maidens wander on with lovers new
In tender leafage shielded from the night ;
Lean cheek on cheek, and set their lips so fast,
That all the starry air melts out above
In that exceeding miracle of time.
Where shall I be that never knew delight ?

O cold thin gloom of Orcus, where the shrill
And fluttered spectres cling like bats between
The dusky columns of the hollow vale :
Whence is return no more and yet no more
To where my mother sits so wonderingly
Because her maid returns not : sweet and dear
My home ; and mother dearer, dost thou wait,
Where valley slopes clench round that inland brim
Of waters ? There the rustling temple-doves
Stream towards the forest mountains with the dawn.
The earnest kings of Hellas carven sit,
Between the steep courts of the sanctuary,

And look the greatness of their lives in stone,
 Ringed in a terrible semblance of their state,
 With brooches on their chariots harnessed near :
 Austere dead men, rare-hearted in their age
 To push among and use the old iron days.
 I am their daughter and I will not fear :
 The cruel god consumes me and I go.

But O ye maidens, weaving by the sea,
 Upon your gentle voices let my name
 Live always, long removed in utter night.
 And in your loves remember her that died
 To launch the sailings of the proudest war,
 When the hard chiefs gazed daunted at the calm,
 The daughter of the monarch of them all.
 And bring me crispy garlands once a year
 To wreath about my urn, so I may say,
 On that green earth I am not all forgot.

EUCRATES *

"It seemeth to me that the young pagan, albeit in his pride of life he was as an animal oftentimes perfect, yet failed in that he had no hope beyond ; old age being imminent when the flourish of these vanities must be abolished."—WILSON'S *Considerations of Religion*, A.D. 1723.

I, EUCRATES of Athens, athlete once,
 Pancratist in the last Olympian games,
 In my flush youth, with every sinew iron,
 Living and loving life and all its flower—
 I, Eucrates, shall answer this old man
 And the low wail of his philosophies ;
 If this be deemed philosophy to weep
 With trembling hands at fortune, and lament
 Because one Death sits portress at the end
 Of Life's best avenues, with equal hand
 To quench the torch of every passenger.
 This dim-eyed dotard with his woolly cheeks,
 Due to the silence of the paths of sleep,
 Must wail to leave what he cannot enjoy,
 And call life nothing : "As the race of leaves

* Some few lines from this poem were incorporated into the "Sketch at Athens" at a time when all idea of reproducing "Eucrates" had been given up.—*Ed.*

So men depart : in slumber they forget
 Their deed and place as tho' they had not been.
 And they have vainly seen a little light
 In tasting treble evil all their days."

Old man, refrain to weep—shall tears put by
 The Titan hand of silence? All is well.
 No gods are we to mete our living hours
 By æons, or carve out our destinies
 Each rebel to his whim : since then the earth
 Would wreck herself on inconsistencies,
 And the whole scheme of nature start awry,
 'Tis better that necessity should guide
 Than dædal-hearted man. To each is laid
 The measure of his days : shall we disdain
 The sweet earth-honey, since our sullen lips
 May not attain the God's ambrosial meal?

Nay, rather this intensity of youth
 Bewilders us like wine : so much to learn,
 Such large and ripe enjoyment every way
 Environs it : wherein, with evident voice,
 The God says, Take thy prime and use its flower :
 The limbs and nerve of morning age are thine
 To use them for a little. And I say,
 God, thou hast given me much : not much in time
 But in enjoyment much. It comes of thee
 This luxurious fervour in the vein,
 The sense of life like the deep air of spring,
 The thrill at noble form or melody
 In breathing words of song, the inordinate
 Relish of action, and the low throb of love.
 Surely it is enough to be alive,
 And taste thy youth and its immensities
 Of all endeavour, without ache or jar,
 And its free pulse divinely arrogant
 To drink the utter splendour of the earth.

All things have process to their end, and these
 Shall have their end : but they are beautiful
 As if they lasted always. The iris glance
 Zoning the crest of momentary waves
 Is not less fair than Pallas' ivory blush
 That Pheidias stamp for ages. I accept

The limit of my time without one tear :
And, till it come, I taste my honeycomb,
And pipe and love and thank the Gods, secure
And never fearing what I cannot change.

Old man, earth's ways are many for delight :
Is love of country despicable joy ?
Is not this legend of our Athens grand,
That, sprung of earth, and owning none supreme,
We teach the nations freedom ? How divine
The echoes throng of beautiful old days,
As, after Dicast toil, in tremulous eve
Out-leaning on our old Acropolis,
We see the land of heroes all our own,
And Hellas crowded under in warm bays,
Hill-fort and pharos, shimmering arsenals,
Sea-mound and headland, violet-amber coil
Of waters, gray-green down, and inland knolls,
And rings and rim of austere eminence.
Or, faint in deeper midlands far away,
See mighty dells whence Cyclops hammered iron,
Or quarried arches of Tirynthian wall :
And solitary gorge, to whose bleached head
The still slow growth of centuries has given
Intensity and emphasis of calm.
See hoary chasms, the charnels of the prime,
Wherein the great hill-monster may have left
His skeleton, an Argus when the string
Of Hermes slew him ; and the dragon coils
Wither in night for ever so, until
A new world wakes upon them, and men cry,
Behold a portent of ancestral days.

This too is fair and nearest Gods' desire ;
When all thy city musters civic war,
To feel the marching pæan lighten thro'
Thy soul, and teach it glorious to assume
The panting need of contest sweet as wine.
Man girds the ache of action on his soul,
And learns he must eternalize himself
By glory, when the bitter loamy mound
Has warpt his bones ; or that last lustral flame
Has wrapt the noble motion and desire
Of life into an urn. Such meanings throng
The flutes of war ; he thrills and on he drives

With searching eyes, until his dream is deed.
Lo, with a cry he wrestles into it all,
The trample and the shocks, the blind hot mist,
Visions of Ares, all the shielded jar,
The foamy contest and the smoking toil
Of steed and phalanx. So he shatters down
The hedge of level steel, invulnerable ;
On crushes thro' the thunder and the blows
Emerging victor : to the Gods he bares
His reeking sword, and fording on with pride
Tares from the rampart altar to his brow
The olive leaf immortal, and so dies.

Or sweet is yet this softer scheme of days ;
When rose-crowned in some marble portico,
We must away beyond the vineyard props,
Still as the green-eyed locust on their leaves—
On mirrored seas, twin tawny sails, a veil
Of saffron, which is sunset, where a horn
Of light just frays the corner gray of the cloud.
There listen to old tumult clothed in odes
By rosy lips and Orthian symphonies
And older legend of the giant wars ;
Here on the branchy marble squares dispread
Fat icy gourds, and nard, and violet crowns ;
And smooth white flute-girls at my feasting couch,
Chirping cicala-like, and petulant
To dabble ivory fingers in the spilth
Of wine-skins. Foremost she, whose bountiful hair
Out-curves the forehead fillet ripplingly
Above her eyes of sea-blue alkanet—
Who sings half-smiling thro' her choral ode
With hectic lips and regal languid eyes ;
She, as the cadence deepens, shakes aside
Her shy luxurious indolence with joy,
Glowes with the access of the music's mood :
Her arms are rhythmic : her full-fruited form
Swathed in delicious tremor : tosses back
Her fleece of richest hair, and readjusts
The sindon tunic edge against the bend
Of milky shoulder, and the curtain shades
Are restless at the little thrilling throat.
Then as one star scales amethystine waves,
In sweet new girlhood laughter fresh as brine
She sparkles and she ceases sudden-wise :

And comes to lean half over into my eyes,
 The fair-limb'd girl lithe to the sandal heel,
 Then slips me, like an eel, her arms about ;
 Sets at my chin her nestling face aglow
 With music, " Love, I sang of, but my song
 To this was merely shadow ; as the glint
 Of yonder Hesperus on intricate waves
 Bemocks the intense Hesperus himself."

Are these not worth the living? Canst thou make
 Thy heart a lie, and say thou scornest all?
 While, therefore, all is good and sound and fair,
 I pour to Human Life this Myrrhine bowl,
 And quaff libation to its dæmon guard.
 I, raising towards the sunset my firm arm,
 Crush in the rich blood-clusters of long rows
 Of vineyards mellowed under full-eyed day ;
 So crown the cup : while thro' its amber rims
 The slant lights twinkle, like a purple sea
 Shot with sun-spangles. All the juice within
 Smooth to the lip, sea-fragment, apple-sweet ;
 And brain and heart leap as I drain its joy.

Cease wailing then, dim-hearted Cynic, cease :
 If Titian shine, unveil thy feeble eyes,
 And learn God's utmost splendour. Light and life
 And energy are ours : and, crowning all,
 Are silence and not undelicious peace.

THE NYMPH AND THE HUNTER

ON such a day beyond the Argive hills
 Some lithe boy-hunter, pushing thro' the weed
 With shining forehead-hair and Delian eyes,
 Comes thro' the tangle on a sudden stream ;
 Sees Pan abroad about the hills, or hears
 The dripping rustle of a Naiad's feet,
 A gleam in cypress shadows, as she fades
 Down thro' the blue with leaf-shades on her cheek.
 But she disdainful half and angry half,
 With something of a smile behind it all,

Avoids the boy and crouches in the blue.
 And as he comes the water scene is stirred,
 And the large crane flaps heavy from the flags :
 And the doves wrestle out against the boughs,
 And the shrill coot drips screaming towards the sedge.

He with surprise in bloom across his brow
 Fears the immortal nymph, yet longs and draws
 Momently nearer : but his hounds in fear
 Whimper and stoop and rub against his knees.

At last she, fearing lest he turn away,
 As loth to lose him as he is loth to come,
 So raises her a little with a smile,
 And asks in smiling anger safe of harm
 As May-frost just enough for mower's scythe,

Unfortunate, what brings thee to thy doom ?

Zeal of the hunt, my hounds, and accident.

Is there no ancient song that such shall die,
 Die in their rashness who with eyes unveiled
 Have seen the flicker of immortal robes
 Under a league of cypress ? These have died
 For little ; but the daring of thine eyes
 Is worthy twenty deaths. Why, wretched man,
 Art gazing still ? Art hungry to descend
 Where Corè gathers not Ætnean flowers,
 And leave the pleasant light ?

Divine one, no,
 It were ungracious to believe that death
 Were fruit of beauty : rather let me live
 With larger pulses having dared to know
 How very beautiful the nymphs can be.

Since I must kill thee, come and speak to me.

I hail this sweet pre-eminence of death
 More than the languid toilsome human years
 Without thee and before thee. Give me, Zeus,
 The lightning swallow wings to rend the air

Of interval between us, let me dash
A moth upon my torch and make an end.

Art come already? Dost already feel
The film upon thine eyelids steeping them?
Wouldst take my hand for comfort at the last?
Take it, for I am something merciful.

Too sweet and palpable to be a dream,
Warm, lithe, and tender hand, if this be death
Give me a life of deaths.

Nay, overbold
I gave thee but my hand and not my lips.

Alas, their fruit was tempting, and my end
So near and they so near, that I have dared
To rob a god of nectar.

Hence, away,
Too long thou cheatest doom : yet having been
Wrongful and once a thief, it makes thy guilt
Not greatly greater if thou thief again.

Ay me, the throbbing tumult of my heart
Will scare my senses sooner than the doom
Of thy sweet vengeance, Goddess.

Then at least
Thou shalt have quiet ending : all thy wrong
Shall not destroy my pity : from this sedge
No further than a wren's flight is a cave
Where I will take thee and thine eyelids close :
Thou couldst not choose so beautiful a grave.
A silence deep in ferny tufts and leaves
That keep the warm sun of the old gone year.
Intricate bents are music at its mouth,
The netted toil of gossamer shall weave
A veil across to break the wandering rays
In colour, and to soften out the airs
Between the wine-dark ivies. Harsher sound
Than the belated clamour of a bee,
Or ripples like the summer in the elms,
Shall not invade the precincts of thy rest.
And if, for vast the mercy of the gods,
I should not come to kill thee at the last,
Then shalt thou build to Pan an altar here,
And in a fillet bring an yearling lamb.

AUTUMN LOVE

THE autumn brought my love to me.
The birds sing not in spring alone ;
For fancy all the year is free
To find a sweetness of its own :
And sallow woods and crystal morn
Were sweeter than the budded thorn.

When redwings peopled brake and down
I kissed her mouth : in morning air
The rosy clover dried to brown
Beneath thro' all its glowing square.
Around the bramble berries set
Their beaded globes intenser jet.

True love, I whispered, when I fold
To mine thy little lips so sweet,
The headland trembles into gold,
The sun goes up on firmer feet.
And drenched in glory one by one
The terrace clouds will melt and run.

Our lips are close as doves in nest ;
And life in strength flows everywhere
In larger pulses through the breast
That breathe with thine a mutual air.
My nature almost shrinks to be
In this great moment's ecstasy.

Lo, yonder myriad-tinted wood
With all its phases golden-brown,
Lies calm ; as if it understood,
That in the flutter of thy gown
Abides a wonder more to me
Than lustrous leagues of forest sea.

And far and deep we heard the sound
And low of pasture-going kine.
Your trembling lips spake not : I found
Their silence utterly divine.
Again, the fluttering accents crept
Between them, failed, then how you wept !

For when you came to speak the part
Which gave yourself for time and years,
The angel in the maiden heart
Could find no other speech but tears.
And their immortal language told
What Seraph's words to speak were cold.

We turned our homeward feet at last,
And kissed to go, but kissed and stayed.
The dewy meadows where we past
Seemed love-full to each grass's blade.
And there our thirsty lips retold
That lovers' story ages old.

They say we sear with growing time,
And scorn in age our young romance :
Yet shall that morning keep its prime
Thro' every earthly shock and chance :
And till my brain is dark with death,
No sweetness leaves that morning breath.

SEPARATED FORTUNES

DEAREST, beholding thy poor married tears,
Since thou hast made thy choice and chosen ill ;
And I must watch the slow pathetic years
Far from that hearth where thou art lonely still.

The cradle of thy sorrow claims thy care,
O patient mother ; on this mate of thine
Smile, if one careless word he has to spare ;
Crouch, if his hand be heavy with the wine.

I am slain with pity of thy doom to be.
I pray ; but easier shall this mountain gate
Unlock its roots and drench them in the sea,
Than I could loose one rivet of thy fate.

Live ; and thy child will grow to love thee right,
The blighted years will rust themselves away ;
Till to thy spirit weary for the night
Sleep shall unroll the prison-doors of day.

THE RED-BREAST

I hear a noise of autumn round again ;
 A few more seasons and we shall not weep :
 We lived divided in our living pain ;
 We shall lie sundered in our latest sleep.

Thou shalt repose where that Italian sea
 Rolls, without tide, more lucid than our waves.
 By northern Humber's foam my rest shall be ;
 The deep shall sound between us in our graves.

The moon at full will beam on either tomb ;
 The stars at morn will hide themselves away.
 No step will come more sadly for thy doom,
 No lark will sing less gaily in the grey.

Love in his end shall falter as did ours ;
 The true shall lose him and the traitor win.
 Time as of old among life's garden flowers
 Shall pull as weeds the choicest buds therein.

Worn with her sentence of eternal blight
 Earth's seasons will not alter or rebel ;
 While up above the shining zenith-light
 They tell me Mercy sits—and all is well !

THE RED-BREAST

My red-breast, continue thy song beyond seasons
 When the passage bird's mad lay is over and past ;
 Pipe sweet to my lady and trill her my reasons ;
 Be thy note weak as dew she will harken at last.

Alder droops and the aspen rocks as the year closes,
 The daisy roots shiver expecting the snows.
 As autumn and equinox alter the roses,
 Reason with her, pretty bird, as it blows.

Tell her the emblem of leaves as they wither ;
 Lay at her feet broken buds, perished fruit ;
 Whisper my darling, that all things drift thither,
 Where the lips of the queens of Love's garden are mute.

For the wood-bee has garnered his cells with bloom-harvest,
And among his sweet wealth he is drowsy and dumb.
For the squirrel has hidden, ere weather bite sharpest,
His acorns and beech-nuts as latter rains come.

O my child, there is age, there is death ; each a spectre ;
One will wither, one whiten thy cheek's elfin rose ;
Garner then, as a wise bee, some store of Love's nectar
To cherish thy heart in its seasons of snows !

THE CARDINAL'S LAMENT

ROME : EASTER DAY, 1872

O PERFECT bride of God, renew thy tears ;
Waken, my Rome, my chosen ; feel the chains
Around thy sacred limbs ; the iron weighs
Thy sweet hand earthward : lonely art thou bound,
In fetters, Rome, a mighty broken queen,
Staring with wild eyes at the Easter dawn—
Thro' all the night most patient till the ray—
The awful dumb dead night, wherein the Lord's
White body lay, with red wounds of the nails,
Waiting the resurrection touch to move ;
And all the watcher angels o'er his shroud
Held awful silence, dim among the gloom,
Nor dared to stir or rustle any wing !

In hope they waited ; we have watched in none.
Lo ! yonder sailing mist of signal rose
Is Easter, our celestial rising-day—
Easter in Rome, where Easter meant so much,
And drew the world a pilgrim ; where men deemed
Her gorgeous consecrations here on earth
Some foretaste of the festival in Heaven.

Beautiful sleeps the city in her mist.
Still are the fountains, calm her mighty squares,
Untrodden all her labyrinth of ways.
The very doves are silent and asleep
That build about St. Peter's. All the trees
In the Pope's garden seem blurred heads of cloud.
The great dome looms dull brown, unburnished yet :
Beneath whose soundless aisles in glory sleep

The dead Popes in their order, pale and still
And patient till the coming of their Christ ;
That Easter of all graves, when Christ shall call
To his doom-angel, "Blow, the hour is ripe,
And ended is the sorrow of my own,
And ready is my sentence on the dead ;
I have completed all my saints, and come.
Gather the nations. I will judge and end !"

Come ! for the earth is heavy, and we mourn.
Ah, spare us many Easters like this last ;
For now the ungodly chide at us, and say,
We have no Christ this Easter to arise,
We watch corruption by some common grave,
Our Christ is in the ground, he will not hear.
We are dreamers, how in some old fabled tale,
A good man died unjustly, lay in earth,
How soldiers sealed the cavern of his rest ;
How lovely dawned that Easter, when of old
The Galilean women came to weep,
Loving the gentle prophet that was gone.
So far the tale is credible : but now
We hear of certain angels, when indeed
Philosophy has settled there were none.
We hear of how the cold dead Christ arose—
But one wise Frenchman wrote a pretty book,
And proved that dead men always fell to dust.

So they blaspheme the watchers at thy grave—
Ah, God, the infidel is master here.
Here in thy Rome, thy last Jerusalem,
Thy righteous rose, the city of thy priests.
Is it well seen, O God ? The abominable
Hath circled us weak fishes with his net.
His chain is on thy vicar, lord of stars ;
The prisoner father droops in lonely halls,
The purple princes of the conclave weep.
While northern vermin, exiles, Piedmontese,
Scum of the alp-root, turn the holy town
To one vast barrack-yard of noisy war ;
Set sentinels, have beacons, order camps,
Clatter along our squares, blow horns, beat drums ;
Until the voices of our rhythmic bells
Are shamed to silence in a place of siege,
And mighty Rome lies dumb without a word.

Behold a trumpet from the Capitol
Calls through the shallow vapour of the dawn.
"The night in heaven is done, but not in Rome,
Her eyes are tender to sustain the sun—
She loves her prison-shadows more than day."
A bugle answers from the Palatine,
"Great Rome is vanquished, fallen. We have come
And conquered the impregnable, the joy
Of God, the lamp of nations. At her gates
We rode, and blew a careless blast and won.
She is bound, we have bound her, we!"

And who are these,
Who call so proudly out of Cæsar's nest?
"We are Italians and have conquered Rome."
If ye indeed be sons of Italy,
Ye are risen against your mother, with foul hands
Ye have smitten upon your parent's holy face,
Ye have bruised her sacred lips until they bleed:
Your hands are red: ask pardon on your knees.
"She turned a tyrant, therefore is she bound;
Turin hath conquered Rome." O deed of shame!
The weasel triumphs in the wolf-cub's lair.
Shall Rome hew Piedmont's wood, go to the well
For Piedmont; fetch and carry, as she's told,
Take buffets in the service of this thing?
Rome with her grand commemorative past,
Searching her annals, reading on her tombs,
Hath only heard of Piedmont yesterday;
As pasture of some hunger-bitten cows
Fed in the misty alp-heart up in heaven;
A realm of neat-herds, frozen in the cold.
Are these thy spoilers, city of the sun,
At whose great royal breasts the baby mouths
Of emperors drew nurture? Is this thou,
Whose mother-vein abounding gave to these
Their after strength to bruise and break the world?
Thy power was on them and they overcame,
And meted out the immeasurable earth
Among the purple nurslings of their loins.
Thy yesterdays, my Rome, are wonderful,
But awful change hath snapt thee in its snare,
With iron edge of strange calamities.
Bring down, my queen, thy bosom on the dust,
Shame thy bright hair with ashes; be their slave,
This hungry tribe of ragged mountaineers,

Who drape themselves in robes that Brutus wore,
And say, "We are Italy!" Return, keep cows,
Bring fodder in. Ye are herdsmen, brutish, boors!
Our common earth is nobler than your lives,
Our soil is mingled with imperial dust,
Our city is one catacomb of kings.
Begone! your feet defile your masters' grave.
But your realm rose a mushroom in the night,
Sardinians. "Nay," ye answer, "we are risen,
Being the sons of progress in the south;
Ours is the 'liberal' kingdom, typifies
The new emergence of the baby-world
To ampler knowledge. Turin with her heel
Upon Rome's neck, means old theology
Prostrate before philosophy's new dawn;
Victor in Rome means light in the human soul—
But you, who blame our Piedmont, have good heed,
You with the tonsure, teacher of the folds,
Priest, prophet, in whatever name or robe,
You lend God man-ward, and raise men to God—
Behold, to all your sort the crucial hour
Arrives, the world-child strengthens out its limbs,
The papmeat season never can return.
Cleanse your religion clean of mythic lore,
Heave out old forms and fables to the deep.
The peoples roar for reasonable meat,
Keen they discern the draff among the food;
Humour their fancies else they will away;
The sheep will crawl for pasture to the wolf;
And leave you droning mass in empty fanes,
And tear the titles to your revenues:
Therefore, O priest, chop science with the best,
Cram us with reason, demonstrate, convince,
Avoid all dogma, or apologise
If gritty Athanasian bits protrude.
Lead us in roads historically laid,
Well lamped at intervals, without a rut
To jug the queasy conscience into doubt.
Then quietly thy sheep in tribes shall come,
And tinkle after with obedient bleats
Him with the crook, the triple cap, and keys.
Hold to the causeway Reason; Faith's a slough
On either hand. One tread, you're ankle-deep,
The next inextricably over-ears.
The flock forbade its pastor to diverge,
So far as hoof bit rock it followed him;

Here it tried footing, sniffed, and halted dead ;
He blundered on, the quagmire sucked him in ;
His woolbacks move without him ; serve him right !”

Which is a parable ! and comes to this,—
An evil people, greedy of a sign,
Must comprehend to worship, analyse
Ere they adore. Each individual soul
With his small lanthorn walks the world alone ;
He lifts no eyes on heaven's high fitful stars ;
Indeed he cannot kindle or relume
Those large white lamps of God ; a rush-light's best,
Whose feeble sputtering insignificance
You trim yourself to grapple with the gloom.

Ye blind and lonely feelers in the dark,
Ye halt men arrogant, ye wise run mad,
Who shall provide such gropers with a god,
Before what essence will ye bend your knees ?
Believe in Euclid, worship axioms,
Trust in triangles, to a cube sing hymns !
I see no other worship for the fools.

Have ye not understood, ere time began
Reason and Faith have been unreconciled ?
Their feud is old as ocean, keen as fire ;
As oil and acid mingle so do they.
You cannot build a reasonable faith.
Vain is your labour, if you rear a wall
And smear no mortar in between the chinks.
Ah, teacher, build thy little tower of cards.
Try ! Meet all views, prune, sift, avoid old sores,
Tread upon no man's theologic corns ;
Frame some mild creed with neither back nor bones,
A mist of genial benevolences
To please all round, Budd, Calvin, Moses, Comte.
Fair bodes the scheme in its first fluid stage,—
It makes a tidy pamphlet, well reviewed,—
But crystallise it can't, except around
Some little tiny notion of a god,
Some germ organic in the central haze
To vivify and quicken the inert ;
Some atom-grain of personality
To sweeten and begin a crust of rays.

Here your dilemma rises, man of mind.
 Either ignore your god-mote, leave your scheme
 A vapid thing to fester on grey shelves,
 Limp, theoretic, leprous, flat, ineane ;
 Or accept something which transcends your rules,
 And promulgate your germ-god's attributes ;
 Till by degrees your wary pen grows warm,
 And the third column of your monograph
 Lands you in purest dogma half-way down ;
 Then the pace strengthens, acrid, on you flow
 Till *finis* dubs you scientific pope,
 Damning opponents all to left or right,
 As idiots or as rascals. Rome herself
 Ne'er fulminated deeper. Hold, my friend :
 Remember where we started ; reason and sight,
 All else you rolled away. Where are we now ?

Your fairest hope is, you may frame at best,
 An almost credible theology.
 Alas, wise man, that "almost" ruins all,
 It means you postulate one thing on trust ;
 Be it the least division of a hair,
 One fibre in a gnat ; confession's made
 That some faith's wanted. Faith, say, in a midge.
 Concede me this—I answer, then believe
 In Juggernaut and all his monstrous heads ;
 Size is no test to the deductive brain ;
 In each the mental process is the same.
 Neither the gnat nor idol can be proved,
 You took the midge on trust, accept the god !

The nations are as children, after all ;
 Some blink, some blinkard. You or I of these
 See by some inches further than our nose.
 I grant our reason's keener, but what then ?
 The contradictions in the simplest creed,
 The reasonablest revelation known,
 Are to our wits and those of country clods
 An equal wall of nonsense. We are lithe,
 And they are lame, but Atlas intervenes,
 And neither can o'erleap his barrier rocks.
 Inform a drayman two and two are five,
 He stares and lounges on. Repeat the lie
 To some great thinker gravely, he growls out,
 "Disturb me not ; return, O dunce, to school."

Suppose God said, "Believe that two straight lines
Could hedge a space in ; be convinced of this,
Or miserably perish. On this truth
My church is founded. All who contradict
Are lost throughout the abysses of all time."
Will reason help you here? You shudder. No.
Dismiss the fancy, and compare the fact.
How hath the just God spoken? He hath bound
All nations at their peril to receive,
That perfect God was also perfect man.
Digest this truth by reason, if you may ;
Reason won't aid ; at faith arrive you must
Sooner or later ; and if you take in
One grain by faith which reason cannot chew,
You may as well swallow a mountain down,
And lay all doubt asleep, and rest your brains
And conscience in a comfortable church ;
Nor let the devils lash you out to the hills
To chop dry logic in the barren cold,
Beneath the stern inexorable stars.

What follows? Has God left the world quite dark?
Have all the ages tumbled men to hell
Along the lampless ledges of the past?
Pitiful souls, whose reason led them wrong.
Is there no beacon ready till the dawn,
No light his love hath saved us? Blind, behold
His affluence dwells among us ; and ye turn
And answer, "Show us God and it's enough."
Lo, Peter's chair, and God in flesh thereon !

Refuse the truth, hale down his vicar's throne,
Lead back the lees of Rome to mock and spit
At the old venerable saint, whose locks
Are white with many winters of long prayer,
Whose hand is weak with blessing men so long,
Whose kind eyes sadden at your ruffian deeds.
Are ye come up with tumult to destroy?
To quench our only light and leave the world
Eyeless and dark—as here our Easter is.
Destruction is so easy. God allows
The fiends to overturn, that they may feel
Horrible hell around them when all's done,
And awful isolation from their deed.

But, ah, ye errant peoples of God's fold,
 How would this holy foster-mother Rome,
 Have gathered you between her ample wings,
 And called you in beneath her silken plumes,
 And yet ye would not. Her sweet house and ours
 Is surely left unto us desolate ;
 And God's own chosen flower, celestial Rome,
 Is chained lamenting in her Easter dawn.*

MEDEA

A TRAGEDY OF JEALOUSY

(DRAMATIC FRAGMENT)

MEDEA

WHY dost thou wrong and shame me more each day ?
 What have I done to merit this disdain ?
 Declare the measure of my injuries ;
 Publish my fault, O perjured ; ere I cry
 To Zeus, that presently he cleave thy brain
 With one keen hissing bundle of blue fire ;
 And Artemis may heave her spear on me,
 If I be found unfaithful in her sight
 By one least errant thought to this hard man !
 Thine answer, king, thy reason ; say them soon.

THE KING

Nay, for I will not answer ; get her in,
 Who was a queen and is a Mænad now,
 A raving woman smitten with wild gods ;
 A Pythoness in wreaths of sulphur fume,
 Perplexed with inward voices terrible—
 Is this a royal fashion to bewail,

* The sentiments expressed in this monologue are those of the Cardinal and not of the writer. Surely, such an intimation is unnecessary : yet a critic with some experience of our reading public thinks otherwise.

To ring out curses wildly in the air,
To entreat and clench numb fingers in the dust?
Roll up thy Bacchanalian hair; begone!

CHORUS

In ashes she has laid her shining head;
Give her the answer of a little word;
Leave wrath to Zeus and to his gods revenge:
Indeed, she is angry, broken, dumb with sighs!

MEDEA

With sighs I think that I have nearly done,
With grief and seed of sighs and fruit of tears,
Done with the earth crowned over with blown woods,
Done with her shadowed vales and sleepy fields,
With the wave rocking and high glorious stars—
I have concluded surely with them all;
And in my distance only one dark gate,
Rent in the rock and fringed with deadly yew,
Invites my lonely feet. I will descend,
Laden with many curses at thy hand,
Along its blind and miserable road,
Hollow, uneven, rugged, arduous,
Into that realm, where Love and wrong of him
Seem like our tears in childhood. I will go;
Let railing cease and trivial anger fall.
I will obey my tyrant and depart.
Yet one small bitter word I mean to speak
Under my breath, not very loud or wild,
Yet some far god will hear it in his heaven;
And see thou to it, king, if answer come.

CHORUS

Revere, O king, her curse and answer it;
Curses are strong; they climb as ravens up
Vexing the easy and complacent gods,
To feed them and fulfil them; inmost heaven
Is weary with their wail and sounding wings;
The drowsy brows of the eternal ones
Move in their rest to frown and sleep again;
Till the great angry Zeus shall prop himself
Wide-eyed upon his elbow, roused at last,
And toss a plague upon thy realm and thee,

To have about him quiet heaven again.
 Therefore, O king, be mild and give reply,
 Nor stand apart with dull eyes on the ground,
 And dumb hard lips. But royally she comes
 To speak and raises out her angry arms.

MEDEA

Ye damsels of this land, when I am dead,
 Search me some grave secluded ; where the step
 Of that light foolish woman, whom he loves,
 May never beat mine ashes. Here engrave
 Around my tomb in yellow characters
 The fair deeds of this hero to his spouse.
 How for a season with man's fickle love
 He gave me adoration as his queen ;
 And loved me fairly once—as these men love !
 The sorrow of my kingdom faded me ;
 To be at once a mother and a queen
 Is care enough, and beauty wanes in care.
 Then he began to scorn my haggard eyes,
 And found their light no longer eloquent ;
 For many watchings at the cradle head
 Drew dimness, where love's glory used to burn—
 At least he said so once. All that is gone !
 So, of this pale face weary, he found one
 More rosy to his mind, a captive wench,
 Silly enough and fresh enough to please
 The veering tyrant. Folded in my robes,
 She struts about the palace at his side,
 Aping the queen with gestures of the plough ;
 And my unstable hand-maids bow to her
 When he is near, and mock her when he goes ;
 Help as they are to none, weak water-waves,
 That point their heads as each wind pushes them.
 And me they counsel to wink hard at this,
 Ignoring my desertion, to look sweet
 And speak him smooth, and, hypocrite, refrain,
 Until this alien fancy's turn is done ;
 And then to kiss and make it up again.
 Ah, God, not so. I will be all with him
 Or nothing ; no dumb slave with pleasant lips,
 While glowing embers at her bosom's core
 Eat out her heart. O perjured husband, nay,—
 I, firm in this my wife-hood, a chaste bride,
 In old love blameless, choose not to survive

This infamy of wedlock ; so I wend
Beneath the mighty darkness all alone,
Unreconciled and homeless. As my home
Is the new Love's to rule in, and my lord
Grooms on his children as a step-father
Turned by this rose-red fool against his own ;
And I pray Zeus to bring into my brain
Strong words and bitter potency of curse,
Against my marriage bed and its ill fruit,
That I may blare them out and die at ease.

CHORUS

Strong is thy seat, O monarch, as the sun ;
And what is weaker than a woman's tear ?
Yet rear her from the ground. The ancient gods
Are fickle if one prosper overmuch ;
Calamity has broken many thrones.

KING

Why this is brave ; must I a king endure
The windy ravings of a woman's ire,
Must I teach reason to her, mad with whims ?
Must a king bend his eyes into his cloak,
And give no maiden greeting in the street ?
Must he go dumbly, tied to one queen's heels,
Where she in strings may lead him up and down,
A craven laughter to the market-wives
Above their baskets ? Threat me not with Zeus,
He has a railing queen to curb at home ;
Call thou on Hêrê ; Zeus will help thee none,
He is well sick of married jealousies.

MEDEA

Thy word is well, and so shall rise my prayer
I will indeed entreat this Zeus no more ;
I will call up beyond him to a god
Mightier than he, a shadow dimly known,—

CHORUS

Refrain, O queen, for awful words are these :
I veil my head in fear as they are said.

MEDEA

O thou beyond the darkness and the cloud,
 How can I make my call, how bring my prayer?
 Can I appeal, strange even to thy name?
 Are not these very weak words that I speak
 Wrung from my heart like blood, tear after tear?
 Wilt thou, O terrible, hear any one?
 Are our tears pleasant, is our bleeding sweet
 Before thee? Are the striving, and the void,
 The throb, and this blind reaching out of hands,
 Excellent music or unheeded noise?
 Thou hast made Love, else hadst thou nothing made;
 Else had the unformed silence still endured,—
 Is not Love rightly cruel as thy self?
 Love thou hast made, and beautiful it is,
 A dream of many lights and shaken waters,
 Excellent, unenduring, human Love!

CHORUS

It is a dreadful daring to beat out
 New roads of prayer. So many gods are known,
 Eager of knees, of kine insatiable.
 In every field a flameless altar stands
 Greedy of sacrifice. Ah, kindle one.
 Numberless temples glisten in the groves,
 The thrones in roomy heaven are full of gods;
 Choose and invoke one hand of many arms
 Able to pluck thee from thy coil of storms.
 Let some god of thy fathers oar thy soul
 To haven. Hold thy fingers on thy teeth;
 Offer no incense to this nameless one.
 Dumb lips indeed were aid as good as his,
 And silence the best censor in thy palm.
 Fate and not God has made thy path to bear
 Flint at thy soles and at thy instep briers.

KING

She is full of dreams and rumours and reproof,
 She is folded in the bands of bitter pride;
 Hard-eyed as death, as unpersuadable,
 Deaf to the deaf winds let her wail aloud—
 In this thy storm remember thou art queen.
 The fury of thy anger overthrows

Thine honour and my patience. Are thy wrongs,
If any, sweeter for unrolling them
Here in broad day before a herd of slaves?
If thou be wounded tend thy hurt at home.
If woe be come on thee, it rightly came;
Yet here I tell no reasons why it grew,
Being a king and guarding my reserve.
Then, on thine honour, which, O queen, is mine,
Control this common phrenzy, and return
Indoors; upon thy duty as a spouse,
By thy maternal love, I charge thee—Go!

MEDEA

Let me be very patient and most meek—
Consider this, ye women, mark it well;
He, even this man perjured, prates of love,
Is wounded in his honour, finds me slack
In wifely duty; come, complete my wrong
And make it perfect; bring thy paramour
Here in my face to teach me how I fail.
This toy of milk and rosebuds, this new girl
Without a purpose and without a soul,
Save to live sleek and whiten her smooth skin,
The slavish plaything of a banquet hour.
Why she would never stand an hour in the rain
To serve the man who loved her; ay, and men
Have fallen to such loving, pure men too—
If she presume to school me in my love,
My soul, let us be patient even in this.
The shadow of the blood which I have shed,
The tumult of the years that I have ruled,
Have never touched her in her rose-garden.
She cannot dream the woman that I am,
This doll fit only to be kissed and fed,
To chide and chatter, pout and start aside
At the first trumpet-note of danger and death,
Screaming and useless, tossed as lumber by.
Then, as thou reachest for thy spear, my Lord,
Wilt thou find counsel at her pretty lips?
Toss her away till thou hast stemmed the storm,
Then, if thou wilt, return and kiss again
Her cheeks to colour. Surely she is meet
To be a hero's wife. O stars of god,
I have known many women brave and pure,
Worthy of kings and wifedom, true and leal;

And in their number she will never come ;
Slave, if thou wilt, and concubine enough,
Not wife nor near it. Else this feeble trash
Would shame us out of wifehood with her fears.
Yet, O my Lord, my only Love, my King,
Altho' the light I found in thy dear eyes
Wanes, and thou standest ever coldly apart ;
Tho' to my dumb entreating hands and eyes
I gain no answer. Tho' the father's face
Harden against our children. Tho' I lose
Thy presence day by day, and evermore
Thou makest any pretext to begone—
Still let me nurse once more my child to rest,
As in old days beside thee ; one swift hour
Endure me ; make pretence that all is well,
Lest the child suffer ; sit with me a little
Just now and then. I am old, I know, and faded,
I never had much youth ! Our years have been
So stormy ; husband, how you loved me then !
How sweet it was to tread the brinks of death,
One will between us. O we went so firmly :
I felt thy hand upon my hand, and fear
Became a laughter. Thro' the smoke of death,
The dragon land, the fiery deeps of blood,
I saw one face—my husband's—and went on,
As tho' I felt the daisies at my feet
In meadow places under quiet woods.
It is my glory to have been thy mate,
Not idle, but another living brain
Building thy throne beside thee, night and day ;
In rumours of conspiracy, in hours
Of chidden armies, still at thy right hand
Undaunted ; when rebellion, bolt by bolt,
Played round our royal heads to tear us down ;
Did I quail then, did I seem pitiful ?
Not so, men said, this woman is all steel,
But they were wrong, I was all love ; no more.
My husband was my law and law-giver,
And righteous any deed that helped him best.
I bathed my hands in carnage and was glad ;
For every stain of blood upon my robes
Had seated him securer on his throne,
Who was my sun in heaven, my oracle,
My breath, my soul, my justice. Hear me now,
When the long dark is ready for my feet ;
Love, husband, master, king, almost my God,

In whose dear service my whole life a slave
 Has bent herself adoring. I required
 Only a little love as my reward ;
 On this my soul was nourished, only on this—
 Now he despises, scorns, and spits at me ;
 Smiles on that other woman, whom he loves,
 And clothes her in all glory, once my own ;
 Whereby I weep all night, and only rise
 To tears—tears—tears ; and I discern no end,
 Save the cold common grave where I descend.

SEMI-CHORUS

The sullen king turns roughly on his heel,
 Whirling his regal mantle round his eyes,
 And so departs with slow steps, obstinate.
 Ah, but the queen, the pale one, beautiful,
 Prone, in the dust her holy bosom laid,
 Mingles her out-spread hair with fallen leaves,
 And sandal-soil is on her gracious head.
 Ah, lamentable lady, pitiful !
 On to an altar in the palace court
 She, crawling, interlaces nerveless hands.
 Attend, her lips are twitching into prayer ;
 Listen, indeed there is no sound in them,
 Only a choking murmur unlike words.
 Bring out her children here, unclasp her arms
 And raise her. It is done. The babies lie,
 Smiling up into her hard vacant eyes,
 One playing with her hair. But she stares on
 In ecstasy, and cannot tell her own.
 O miserable mother ! bring her in ;
 Since I discern the storm-drops on these flags,
 And clouds are rough with thunder overhead.

CHORUS

Sweet are the ways of death to weary feet,
 Calm are the shades of men.
 The phantom fears no tyrant in his seat,
 The slave is master then.

Love is abolished ; well, that this is so ;
 We knew him best as Pain.
 The gods are all cast out, and let them go,
 Who ever found them gain ?

Ready to hurt and slow to succour these ;
So, while thou breathest, pray.
But in the sepulchre all flesh has peace ;
Their hand is put away.

ONE VIEW OF WORSHIP

SEVEN times a day in groanings manifold,
I bend with one petition as thy slave,
My great prayer leaving lesser wants untold ;
Thrice in each night I kneel out in the cold.

To this one apple in the grove of prayer
My thought, my life, my pulses turn and crave.
Earth doth not yield another boon so fair,
Hope of my youth, dream of my silver hair !

All other gifts are barren as the sea.
My field of time will only ripen weeds,
If this fruit perish unenjoyed by me.
Hearken, because I cry continually !

Men ask such vain and empty things at best,
Health, children, coin, a fair wife, merry deeds ;
While these with many paltry needs molest,
Single and easy is my sole request.

Men kneel and mutter over forms by rote,
They are content with any gabbled word ;
But I, with broken voice and burning throat,
On one distinct entreaty dwell and gloat.

My seething thought inclines to one desire ;
A want that vexes as a grinding sword
Marrow and bone ; whose abstinence to fire
Changes the common air which I respire.

Are fervid lips and idle ones the same,
Is it as one to pray or hold our peace ?
If one neglect confound my words of flame
With their chill drivel, will no heart exclaim,—

" Let worship die ; entreat not Zeus again
Hard in his crust of apathetic ease ;
Control thy tears, thy bleeding heart refrain,
He never solaced any in their pain.

" Curl up no more vain incense to his skies ;
Beat not thy breast, and eat thy bread in peace.
Rend not thy robe, since he alone is wise
Who sips the cup of pleasure till he dies.

" God's equal dealing differs from thine own ;
His justice is not weighed in human scale.
He hardly hears thee bless, or heeds thee moan
Thy hoard of curses climbing to his throne.

" Why wilt thou weary him ? Thy voice ascends
Weak, yet persistent ; as an insect's wail,
It trickles up for ever, and offends
Where daylight into god-light rushing blends.

" It beats the porches of eternal beams,
Importunate it will not be denied ;
A weary echo in a land of dreams,
Marring the tender chime of sleepy streams.

" It will not fail or be denied or sleep,
Or cease or gather silence ; as a tide
That breaks, recurs, and breaks along the deep ;
Until a dreamer on the shore could weep,—

" So irksome is its iteration grown,—
To get the sound away and have his rest.
So may at length one prayer win access, thrown
Against heaven's gate as feeble foam is blown !"

So men will change thy glory into worse,
And idle lips will censure thee, most blest.
I ask no miracle ; that thou reverse
The seasons, or descend in some great curse.

Nature is stronger than thou art divine ;
I pray not foolish for her overthrow ;
That snow-time hang ripe clusters on my vine,
That rain refresh my field and only mine.

I ask not, that in spheres of ether grey
 The blackened stars be torn and hurled below ;
 That the round sun ride eastward on his way,
 That Luna draw the deeps three times a day.

But all my being withers in the want
 Of one ripe, excellent, and righteous thing,
 For which the sources of my nature pant
 And dwell in bitter thirst until thou grant.

Wilt thou endure, while changeful seasons roll,
 To watch my changeless hunger riveting
 Its earnest eyes on one eternal goal ?
 O lord, I ask thee to complete my soul !

Count over, king, my multitude of prayers,
 Number them all, if number's feeble wing
 Can rise to comprehend that host of theirs ;
 Which holds thee, god, my debtor unawares,

For praises unreturned, unheeded vows,
 Cries in the night which had no answering,
 For many moanings and unnumbered woes—
 Hear, for a man gives payment where he owes.

Ah, deal not falsely, as a merchant may,
 Who take thy merchandise and doth not bring
 Coin to reward its use for many a day—
 Nay, thou wilt hear and, *if thou canst*, repay !

THE TWO OLD KINGS

A SKETCH AFTER KAULBACH

ONCE two ancient kings and comrades, princes of a kindred
 line,
 Held high wassail until midnight in a castle on the Rhine.

There around them sate their vassals, peers and pages,
 knights and squires ;
 There they long replenished beakers in the glare of pine-
 wood fires.

As they feasted they remembered deeds and faces turned to
dust,
Days, that as sepulchral armour long had lain besmeared
with rust.

In that hall forgotten faces rose above each feasting guest,
Dim hands trailing phantom garments, dim eyes long con-
signed to rest ;

And one royal toper rising to his cousin reached the cup,
And the other pledged his brother as he drank the Rhenish
up.

In his sluggish veins the vintage glowed as fire and nobly
ran ;
Till his trembling hands grew stronger, and new courage
flushed the man,

Then he spake—"O brother, brother, we are met indeed at
last
In this grey old keep, where-under roars the Rhine and
howls the blast ;

Sixty years of rolling water this great river of our land
Hath returned to father Ocean since I held thy kindred hand.

We were each then boyish princes ; time ran merry ; life
was gold,
And our fathers held the sceptres that our sons shall shortly
hold ;

Beardless boys, clear-lipped as maidens then, now see this
hoary fell,
Whiter than the seven mountains, fleeces down for half an
ell ;

Flowing over throat and breast-plate, as a broken streamlet
full
Freezes over some rock's shoulder in a triple icicle.

Cousin, thou art clothed with winter underneath thy golden
crown.
Many lines of many sorrows seem thy temple, track thy
frown.

Old dear face with heavy eyebrows brooding o'er its buried
joy ;
As I search its saddened outlines hardly can I trace the boy ;

As I left him in his April, as I find him in his fall,
Here where ice-bound heights are frozen in a rolling vapour's
pall.

Care—we care not ; nature ripens, nature renders back to
clay ;
Shall we, weighed with eighty winters, whine ignobly for
delay ?

Rather chide the tardy summons, heroes harnessed for the
gloom ;
Shall we linger, soured faces, carping at a grandson's bloom,

Envious of his heyday prowess ?—We have memories full as
fair,
We were young and we will tell it, gloating in a half despair.

Smiling at the vanished fancies, tho' our eyes are almost wet ;
Scorning at the withered rosebuds, tho' we love their perfume
yet.

In the dry rose of remembrance yet one petal is not grey ;
May the month was, woods were greening, birds were choral,
meadows gay.

On the labyrinthine pine-woods rosy clots of dawn rode high ;
They were hunters in the forest, on that morning, you and I ;

Then no hart, gigantic quarry, lured us thro' the echoing
green,—
I believe, since God made woman, bluer eyes have never been

Than her own, my pretty wood-dove's ; as we found her
singing there,
On her brow unrisen morning, pearls of night among her
hair.

O my love, my perished beauty, tender lamb of mountain
fold ;
Little brow too wild and humble to sustain the queenly gold ;

How they rent me from thy bosom ; when my royal father
found,
That thy kisses were my empire ; and all glory empty sound

To the joy of being near thee ; thy least sigh was worth a
throne ;—
'Take, O sire, this hateful glory, so thou leave me to mine
own ;

Let my brother have mine heirship—' But they tore me
from thy mouth,
Linked me to a frigid princess from the olives of the south.

We were wed ; she bare me children ; side by side in time
to come,
Crowned we sate and clothed in purple up above the people's
hum.

When I rode to fight she kissed me coldly ; and, when I
returned,
Gave me duteous salutation as a wife should, greeting earned

By the victory I brought her. So we lived, and so she died.
She was not my love, ah, never ; tho' she slumbered at my
side.

At my side in every pageant moving with a stately mien ;
Me she never loved, but only much she loved to be my queen.

Ah, my wood-girl, doth the rain beat rudely on thy cloister
grave
In the little Saxon village ? Doth the night as wildly rave,

As up here, with drops of tempest, rushing mist, and sailing
cloud ?—
Thro' the turmoil, lo, it rises one sweet still face in a shroud—

Comrade, pledge to my beloved ; drink, my brother in re-
nown,
Drink and dash the crystal beaker in a thousand fragments
down.

Hail ! sweet ashes—it is spoken—on to me the goblet pass ;
All is said—the cup lies broken—no vile lips shall touch this
glass."

As he ceased his cousin o'er him reached a cheering arm
and spoke,
Pointing thro' the oriel casement at the dawning where it
broke ;

"Love is well, O royal brother ; nothing is more sweet in
grace,
Than the tear-drop which an old man sheds upon dead
memory's face.

Love is well, regret is lovely : but and if our day is done,
See, there rises ampler promise to new men with yonder sun.

When our years that ripened roses only send sepulchral
weeds,
Shall we find no consolation thinking on our famous deeds ?

Strike a sterner chord, to music heroes let us march along ;
Let us to the grave go pacing with a sturdier battle song.

Drink we to our dead dear comrades, loyal men, of iron
might ;
Who with us in front of onset felt the ecstasy of fight

Brace their sinews ; for the sweetest love that ever yet was
won,
Pales beside this, as a taper wan before the regal sun.

Drink we to our high ambition ; drink the triumph of our
throne !"
But the other aged monarch answered in an altered tone.

"Five fair kingdoms left my father ; two the conquest of his
spear ;
I have seen their vines uprooted and their cities, red with
fear,

Lurid heaps of smoke and cinders. I have heard the orphan's
wail ;
I have seen the giant Famine sitting roofless in the hail.

Of my father's laurel chaplet I have let two bay leaves fall,
I have lost two realms, whose banners flout me in my vacant
hall.

And the three remaining kingdoms seem to scorn my feeble
 sway ;
And I hear a palace murmur, that they count my life delay.

Here my huge sons stand and whisper, 'Surely he has
 reigned too long ;
There his armour hangs rust-eaten, there his bugle, mute
 from song,

Never more shall waken echoes. Surely he has ruled enough,
Mark the leather of his gauntlet, how the worms are in the
 stuff ;

How the moths have marred his mantle ! There his empty
 baldric lies.
Shall we longer make obeisance to an old thing we despise ?'

Wistful each one nods and gazes, as along the downward
 gloom
I descend with feeble paces to the children of the tomb."

"Nay, my brother," spoke the other, "these things are an
 old man's due ;
Faces come and faces perish and old races cede to new.

Comrade, cheer ; tho' disappointment every year remaining
 brings,
Shall we die faint-hearted soldiers, shall we pass despised
 kings ?

Friends may fail and Love forsake us, Hope may falter,
 Faith decay,
And our pleasant dreams may open wings whereon to flee
 away.

Wine can stir the languid pulses to the ripeness of their
 youth,
Flashing back an old man's mistress in her radiance, in her
 truth ;

Wine can make us half immortal :—nay, the years are out
 of tune,
Since the whispering meadows heard us whispering in the
 ancient June.

Let them go : we pass to silence, and our deeds are dream
and nought—
Nought? Yet dreams whose recollection holds us heroes,
heart and thought ;

Hark, our veterans there below us talk the same refrain as
we,
Harping on a faded love-song every soul in his degree ;

Draining out an old experience, how an angel's golden wand
Struck the rock, and found the waters at the thirsty soul's
command.

Then how purely came the torrent, till the devil changed the
draught ;
And the drinker rose up poisoned, with a worldling's iron
craft.

How the broken years of passion cast him into sterner mould,
How the icy frost of fashion turned each genial impulse cold ;

King and peer and mailed captain, equal manhood, diverse
grade,
All imperfect, hardly trembling on the skirts of lengthened
shade ;

Bound together, king and soldier, onwards to the land unseen,
Where the ancient heroes slumber with grey faces, cold and
keen.

And, tho' we shall part to-morrow, ne'er on earth to meet
again,
I beyond the Northern mountains, thou along the Southern
plain—

See ! that morrow of our parting breaks upon our wassail
feast,
Flooding on the wreathen archways early splendour from
the East—

Yet still drink we our next meeting, drink it deep in beakers
seven,
Brother, ended is our banquet, we will hold the next in
heaven ! ”

ODE TO THE SUN

WITH sound thy car ascends from ocean soundless,
In horns of light ;
Beyond, around, beams enter into boundless
Grey halls of night.

Thy wheels roll over regions thunder-wasted,
Blue fields divine
On giant mountain clouds, whence none have tasted
The berry of wine.

The ray-gloss on thy wings is amber, shaken
To rosy showers ;
Thy voice is on the waters, and they waken
Like a field of flowers.

Thy word is as a lyre-beat or the laughter
Of loves unseen ;
Thy gleam as one sweet tear that gathers after,
When joys grow keen.

Thou sayest, I have no lot or hand in slumber ;
I am Light, supreme.
My robes of glory quench the planet number,
As Day pales Dream.

The soft Moon is my sister and my shadow ;
Her torch is mild,
Among the globe-flowers of my heavenly meadow
She moves a child.

She has stolen a drop of incense at mine altar,—
Some light I leave
To make Heaven fair around her, when I falter
In lines of eve.

She is given a little reign between my splendours ;
Her intervals
Sustain with rest each soul, who homage renders
At festivals

Of me, great Phœbus, pinnacled in ardours ;
Whose tyrant throne
Burns in blown cloud behind the ocean harbours,
As ruby stone.

In the dimness of my regent anguish strengthens
The sick man's sighs ;
The miser shudders as the shadow lengthens,
The raven cries.

The sap of leaves, the blood in birds, of fishes,
The world's pulse, wane.
The doors of sense are barred with sleepy wishes
And phantom pain.

Till in the garden of the grave the nations
Discern my beam ;
And rise up heartened with my consolations
From nets of dream.

I refresh all things, save the blind dead faces
With lips at peace.
These dead are mighty in their charnel places,
I cheer not these.

Their lips are unrefreshed with drops of thunder ;
Their eyelids worn
Are never lifted to my way in wonder
At eve or morn.

But bitter dust is in their teeth to swallow ;
Their heart is stone ;
What Lord is he whom these blind dreamers follow ?
I know not one !

But dim dry roots shall bud ; on fallows poorest
Sour bents shall shine ;
And wasted wrinkled heights be clothed with forest ;—
These are my sign !

In grass-land shall arise a sound of heifers,
A voice of herds ;
I bathe my glowing hands in breathing zephyrs,
I call the birds.

In ripple and perfume and deep breezy lustre
My flame-feet tread ;
My girdle sprinkles moons in many a cluster,
As sand is shed ;

Prodigal beams, and flakes, and ardent arrows
Are my Light's tide ;
A mighty flood, whose channel never narrows
Or waves subside.

I am the gates of life. My dawn is burning
With foam of stars,
Bright as the margin of a wave returning
In reflux bars.

The rain wails not around my palace chamber ;
There day-long glows
Increase and deepen from Auroral amber
To Vesper's rose.

The planets veil their burning faces near me ;
The green world's ends
Flash up through miles of ether that uprear me ;
Pale vapour blends

In underneath, unfolds itself or closes,
Divides, dilates ;
The Sea, my path-way, spreads her deep with roses
To my red gates.

When Ocean's rocking floors are wrought with anger,
When sore the sea ;
The heart of Earth is heavy in her danger,
Her cry for me.

She rears her regal head, as my orb passes,
With weary eyes ;
Her long hands fruitful thro' the roots and grasses
Yearn at my skies.

" In travail of great seas I faint surrounded,"
She wails distressed ;
" Too long have billows beaten in and wounded
My patient breast.

" Too long the wasteful waves eat out mine islands,
Pluck at my sides,
Draw down my sea-board cities into silence
With barren tides.

" With rain and rush of breakers hath contended
My hollow form ;
Am I, God's daughter, to endure unfriended
The lash of storm ?

" Ray out and quench, the furious deep will hear thee ;
Ah, lord, descend !
Curb those wild horses of the foam ; they fear thee ;
Their riot end ! "

Earth cries ; her eyes are dim with sand ; her mournful
Dumb hands bewail,
Naked, in mute appeal against the scornful
And haggard hail.

Till I unfold my glory as a mantle ;
Till my red arm
Lull down the chidden breakers into gentle
Ripples of calm.

Then Earth curls up her incense to my palace ;
Her fanes are full.
The Flamen rolls libations, and his chalice
Is crowned with wool.

The rows of altar-girls with ringing voices,
And youths with lyres,
Sing to the radiant father, who rejoices
To hear their choirs.

The wafted echo of their measure answers
To the sun-steeds' hooves ;
The rhythmic limbs and raiment of the dancers
Flash in far groves.

What words are these, that, rolled around me driving,
Proclaim me blest ?
Sweet as the wrestle of my reins arriving
In fields of rest,—

"All hail, eternal Phœbus, king of ether,
Ruler of rays ;
Storm and the deep thou bindest in thy tether,
God of Heaven's ways !"

THE GARDEN OF DELIGHT

SLUMBER, child, sweet-heart of Eròs, and dream in thy
lover's own garden,
Where the sweet apple abounds and the myrtles are many
and deep ;
Rest, he has watch at thy pillow of rose-petals shed ere
they harden ;
Rest, if a harsh wind arise then his wing shall be round
thee in sleep.

If a sunbeam alight on his darling, the god will arise and
give shadow ;
If a droning importunate bee loiter, he makes it go by ;
Tho' it seek to no flower that is sweeter than this sleeping
one in its meadow ;
No honey-bloom equals his own in the lands where the
asphodels lie.

Dream, therefore, love's child-love, serenely, thy suitor will
helm thee sweet vision ;
Some shadows are baleful of night ; he will heed that he
guide them away.
He will breathe on thine eyelids a dream drawn down from
the valeheads elysian,
Painted with rainbow and set to the music of murmuring
spray.

Lest thy soul pine for his in the absence of sleep, lest
another be near thee,
He will send thee his glorified form, more a god than he
dares be awake.
O my child, the intense very Eròs with beams of his presence
would sear thee ;
Therefore he softens his rays ; his effulgence he dims for
thy sake.

Ah, slumber is well, but the rising is better, my queen, as
the shaken
Pictures of orchards in waves echo back the gold apples
less clear ;
So 'tis sweeter, if Eròs with burning lips over thee whisper,
to waken ;
Then arise for his doves are around and no ravens of Anteros
near.

AT THE COUNCIL

I STOOD to-day in that great square of fountains :
And heard the cannons of St. Angelo
In many echoes towards the Alban mountains
Boom over Tiber's flow.

I saw the nations throng thy burnished spaces,
Cathedral of the universe and Rome ;
One purpose held those earnest upturned faces
Under the golden dome.

Tumult of light rolled on that human ocean
Climax of sound replied in organ storms ;
And shook those altar Titans into motion,
Bernini's windy forms.

They seemed to toss their giant arms appealing
Where Angelo with mighty hand has striven
To paint his angels on an earthly ceiling
Grander than those of heaven.

Mid-air among the columns seemed to hover
Incense in clouds above that living tide.
Whence are these come, who tread thy courts, Jehovah,
In raiment deep and dyed ?

"We are gathered thine elect among all races ;
As at God's birth with Magian kings, afar
Thy whisper found us in our desert places,
Where we beheld thy star,

"Ninth Piety of Rome ; with whom the keys are,
Regent to hold God's house, to feed his flock
Where Cæsar ruled ; and thou, supplanting Cæsar,
Art firm on Peter's rock.

"Nicæa's thunders yet are fresh as morning
Beams in whose light the church has gone and goes,
To-day Nicæa peals in Rome her warning ;
Pontiff, to curse thy foes

"We come, Armenia, Gaul, Missouri, Britain ;
The chosen of the chosen priests are there.
To all men hath gone out his mandate written,
Who fills St. Peter's chair.

"Grey heads have waves Atlantic wafted scathless,
Weak feet have toiled o'er Libyan hills in fear,
Old Bishops from the regions of the faithless
Have crept on crutches here.

"To far Canadian meres of ice-bound silence,
To cities lost in continents of sand,
To shoaling belts around Pacific islands,
The Pontiff raised his hand.

"Then with one mind they came, the Bishop leaders,
The outpost Captains of the Church at fight,
From uplands clothed with Lebanonian cedars,
From realms of Arctic night ;—

"Lo, we are ready at thy summons, father ;
Loose and we loosen, bind and we will bind.
The conclave princes at thy blast shall gather
As red leaves after wind.

"Thunder the doctrine of this last evangel,
Clear as the note of doom its accents sound !
While men regard thine aspect, as an angel
In the sun's orb and crowned !

"At thy reproof let nations quail in terror,
And tremble at the pealing of thy word,
For God has made thy mouth his own, and error
In thy voice is not heard.

"Let all be doomed on whom thy curses thunder,
 Let none be righteous whom thou dost withstand ;
 The priesthood of a word we kneel in wonder,
 And kiss thy sacred hand."

"Hear, shade of Calvin, ghost of Luther, hearken,
 Ye renegades of northern yesterday ;
 Infidel bones, which years of silence darken,
 Turn to salute our ray !

"Leave vain philosophies, old dreamer Teuton,
 Great drowsy fly in webs of logic weak ;
 We silenced Galileo, menaced Newton,
 And Darwin shall not speak.

"Behold a sign, ye sceptic sons of evil,
 The dogma ; raising which, as Michael, brave
 Our pope, confront their scientific Devil
 Over each unclosed grave ;

"Till Death and Doubt be thy tame sheep, O pastor,
 Pontiff of souls and vicar of God's choice,—
 Infallible ; in whom the spirit-master
 Hath breathed his spirit voice,—

"Explain our Faith ! All faithful hear thy mandate,
 Emperors watch in dread our world debate ;
 Thy fear is on all peoples !" (but the bandit,
 Who plunders at thy gate.)

ROME, *November*, 1869.

ARROW OF LOVE

ARROW of Love, is thy wound small,
 Or can it slay men after all ?
 Dart of Desire, is thy hurt brief,
 Or does its pain crown human grief ?
 O lip of Eros, is your breath
 Gentle as sleep or harsh as death ?
 Ah, Love, but why in after years
 Must thy son bring us burning tears ?

A scar recalls thy touches bland,
Their pressure deepens to a brand.
And he, the deity of pain,
Sits pining, as a moon in wane.

His eyes are faded with despair,
The violet sickens in his hair.
And lonely in a land of reeds
He weeps his vanished days and deeds.
For ashes stain the gracious head ;
The garment of his glory dead
Is rent with sighing "well-a-day !"
His wings are dusty, flakes of clay
Harden upon his comely feet ;
His voice is shaken and unsweet,
Hollow and thin his answer, low
As some lamb's bleating in the snow.

Against a spit of tawny land
Love sits lamenting. On each hand
The water of a tarn is still ;
The dead clouds hang without a will.
One solitary rose-bush near,
With cankered bloom and leaves gone sere,
Is in his sight, and moves his breath
To sing about this rose's death ;
And, as his thoughts are rough and few,
They make his measures rugged too.
One only cadence hears his grief,
The dry fall of each broken leaf.

THE LAMENT.

O MY fresh rose, my rose of dew,
Thy heart is stained and old ;
Thy petals are no longer new,
No incense fills each purple fold.
At thy best who held thee dearer ?
But June is gone and snows are nearer.

O my rose, my rose of June,
Faded daughter of the field,
Save thy perfume for a noon
Longer, and endure to yield
A little more delight, ere I am lonely
Over my dead rose, who loved one rose only.

THE ANSWER

O MY love, my queen of May,
The light of youth is gone.
Thy pretty tresses gather grey,
Thy rosy lips are wan.
Will thy grey eyes alter yet,
And their nuptial smile forget?

O my love, will Time deceive,
Will he alter true Love so?
There is more in Love, believe,
Than the silly nations know;
More in Love when bloom is dead
Than the roses round his head.

O my love, and if thou need
Harbour when the north-winds blow;
If thy tender foot-prints bleed
On the flints among the snow;
Love will raise a sheltered cot,
Where the ice blast enters not.

O my true-love, we are wise;
When snow whitens all our land,
Underneath the cloudy skies
We will travel hand in hand.
Since we have not far to go
To our rest beyond the snow.

CONCLUSION

So Love lamented by the brim,
And I arose and answered him.
Until his rainy eyes became
Divine once more with subtle flame.
And down he leant to glean again
His arrows scattered on the plain;
And hitched his shoulder-quiver right,
And felt his loosened bow-string tight;
And shook the tresses from his eyes,
And gave a few short dreamy sighs;
Until a sunbeam smote his wing;
He shivered lightly at its sting;
And with a slow smile then arose,
But in departure one fair rose

Fell from his crown ; and so he past ;
While o'er the sullen mere-waves fast
Beams numberless in golden beads
Rocked on the ripples and the reeds.

AN AUTUMN SERENADE

BEFORE the tears of autumn shed
All leaves away at winter's door,
My queen, across the foliage tread
Of yellow gusty woodland floor ;
And watch the squirrel overhead
In stories of her pine-trees hoar.

When only redbreast chirps thee on,
And fingered chestnut leaves are cast ;
And gaudy greenwood gathers wan
On lime and beech, and sickens fast ;
And acorns thicken paths upon,
And shrew-mice treasure winter mast.

When plovers tremble up to cloud,
And starling legions whirl apace ;
And redwing nations restless-loud
Are over every fallow's face ;
And barren branches like a shroud
Blacken the sun-way's interspace.

The winds, all summer idly dead,
Give prelude to their winter tune.
Grey hoar-frost hears them, from his bed
Lays out white hands, and wakens soon.
He laughs as soughing elm-trees shed
Old homes of breeding rooks in June.

NATURE'S RENEWING

THE genial year awakening,
When mellow air begins to burn,
Arises in a robe of spring
From ruined winter's hoary urn ;
Whom hearing, all dumb birds must sing.

The sacred earth in her delight
 Steams under April's wheeling sun.
The king-cup gathers amber might,
 The clouds in triumph melt and run.
The grey lark trembles out of sight.

And here and there a fervid bud,
 The restless herald of the year,
When vernal currents move its blood,
 Expands in painted petals clear.
The flushed merle screams along the wood.

The rain is tender on the ground,
 Smooth-headed robins ruffle out
Their plumage. Spring, in every sound
 Divine and sudden, sheds about
Her green dilation at a bound.

The sap in old blind things is warmed :
 The eager palm outruns its leaves.
The peering crocus, turf-embalmed,
 In gardens under cottage eaves
Comes now the hollow winds are calmed.

Those faint red boles with many a line,
 Those peeling sides, the ring-dove's perch,
Which white in darkened coppice shine
 Are silver clusters of the birch ;
They seem bright woodland ladies fine !

The larch has blushing finger-tips ;
 As tho' love-whispers of the spring
Had reached her on the March-winds' lips,
 Or she had heard them in the ring
Of rain-drops down the forest slips.

And in the wasted snow-drop's room
 Come daffodils abundantly,
The treasure of the violet's gloom
 Dividing with her. Can they be,
Those steady purples aspen bloom ?

O glory of the dim green bough,
O April floors of primrose zone :
It seems as if the grey world now
Had laid asleep her ocean moan,
And barren drifts of windy snow.

A MEETING AND ADVICE

TRUE heart, under grey-green arches
Where the crimson cones of larches
Bud in bristle leaves ;
Print thy feet in dewy places,
Where, amid the king-cup faces,
The mead-spider weaves.

On the down thy raiment glistens,
In his nest the wheatear listens,
From thee flows a lay ;
Doves refrain to pipe their trouble,
Ledges of hill fountains bubble ;
Give thee, love, good day.

Art thou cold, because I follow
Up the wood-way, in whose hollow
Bluebells haunt the rills ?
Wind-flowers carpet all the cover,
And there come, now March is over,
Shoaling daffodils.

Ah, my love, thy shadow only
Warms the folded dew-drop, lonely
In secluded dells.
Hear my April prayer unchidden,
One which birds in nest-down hidden
To their consorts tell.

Young and lonely hold no measure,
Youth's a mint of sterling treasure ;
If we hoard, we lose.
Age a coin, which Love refusing,
Out of date and out of using,
Takes not as his dues.

Rose-buds, in a land of roses,
Wither ere they come to posies ;
Maiden roses mourn.
Sweet mouths many are not tasted,
Or their kisses won are wasted,
Hour and year forsworn.

Though all ends in loveless sleep,
When the ripe hour beckons, reap—
Reap, nor sourly say,—
“ Fresh cheeks wear not weeping-stain ;
Love is spoil and wedded pain
Taint their rose away.

“ Wisest he who can despise
Cupid’s evanescent dyes,
Passion’s brittle prime ;
He shall revel long and well
In a careless citadel,
Monarch of his time.”

Answer, Dove, “ tho’ Love’s best sweet,
Like an angel’s glorious feet,
Flash and pass no more.”
Answer, sweet, “ Love may not last,
Yet the perfume of his past
Lives in riper store.

“ He, who wavered long at noon,
Sits alone in darkness soon,
White with dusty snow.
Eyes can answer, hands as well,
Rusting years unlearn their spell.”
Answer, dearest, so—

Fortune plays not twice the giver,
Leave it once and lose it ever,
As we speak, ’tis flown.
Bind Love, ere the child-god spread
Gauzy wings above his head,
And fickle leaves his throne.

So that when thy merry weather,
Loses heart and changes feather,
 And Time's hearth is grey ;
Love will save one fervid ember,
That wild east or bleak December
 Will not quench away.

"LOVE SHADOWS"

SOUL of love, life's only light,
Near thee, clothed in thy delight,
 The dreaming of one dream of pain
 Hath wakened me unblest.

Ay, and rest is near thee sweet ;
But one dream-word will repeat
 Sullen echoes, sad as rain,
 In sorrow on my rest.

And a whisper comes and goes
As mine eyelids vainly close,
 "Time thy darling's cheek will stain,
 Years thy love may test."

"Love endures not locks of grey.
Time, my lovers, looks your way,
 Angry that ye are so fain,
 He creeps to spoil your nest."

Time is wroth because I steal
Waxen lips for my love's seal ;
 That thy kisses are as dew,
 As faint warm gales thy sighs.

Thou art lovely in each word,
With ways gentler than a bird ;
 Thy delight is always new
 As hunger or sun-rise.

"LOVE SHADOWS"

Time the serpent lies concealed
In the city, by the field ;
 We are clay beneath his hand
 To leave and hate our joys.

Time an adder lurks and glides
In Love's pleasant pasture-sides,
 He hears vows many as the sand
 Broken soon as toys.

Time and Farewell hand in hand,
As sighing reeds, grey shadows stand
 And whisper, "Life is not more dear
 Than this nest they have strown ;

"Can he leave her?" Farewell sighs,
"I will rend them tho' each dies ;
 One boy's trouble, one maid's tear
 Are nothing ; both mine own !

"This girl is pretty as she lies
With the tear half in her eyes ;
 And he seems, as if her breath
 Made his own heart go.

"Time my brother, Death my friend,
Each relent ; I never bend ;
 Tho' I seem less hard than Death,
 I am utter steel and snow.

"I bring fair faces to grey dust,
I change to loathing maiden trust,
 As pear-bloom crumbles under rain ;
 I, Farewell, can do this.

"For Love I bargain ; he is sold.
I alter sweet lips into cold.
 I rend as Death does, and my pain
 Is terrible as his.

"I let live but I can teach
Two souls, aching each for each,
 To live and never meet again,
 To love and never kiss."

So the shadow seemed to say,
And melted on the morning ray,
And I turned, and found my Pearl
Sweeter for surprise.

Night is long and dreams are fleet ;
I will deem their visions, sweet,
Light as that least ripple curl,
That on thy temple lies.

Hold in mine thy rose lips fast ;
Who shall say which kisses last ?
What, tho' weeping-ripe, my girl,
Smile thro' rainy eyes.

Love me ; spring goes ; every hour
Beats out petals from the flower.
What, dear heart, if love be shed
Under foot as soon ?

Shall the rolling month lay mute
Honey word and tender suit ?
Shall the discord of the dead
Alter all Love's tune ?

Ah, we know not ; but indeed
It may sweeten true Love's need,
Hearing near a phantom tread,
Black in golden noon.

THE KING'S MONOLOGUE

HEAR this, ye idle nations, and be still ;
Hear this, unstable children of revolt ;
My voice is with you yet a little time.
I have worn out the marrow of my days
Unrecompensed, unreverenced ; evermore
I am a broken life and dispossessed
Of filial adoration in my wane.
Ye run to any light and hail it guide,

Ye march for any ensign under heaven,
And learn rebellion with a bestial zeal ;
Prone in contagion to a blinder doom
Ye perish from the precincts of the land.
Therefore have I been patient from disdain,
And slow to chide with weakness ; I have made
Revenge forgiveness, when some wounded thing
Lay in the shadow of my sword to die.

Still I forgave and still ye vexed my soul
With wayward fluctuation, anarchies,
And panic tumults in the dead-ripe noon
Of cloudless safety. Ye are wholly seed
And stock of discord : I am weary now.
Leave me a little rest before I sleep.
Effort is food and honey to the young :
They breathe by action ; but the old man folds
His mantle, storing breath in utter peace.

Consider, Heaven, that these have set my days
A discord, this my state a bitter thing,
And made my spirit hungry for repose.
Can they remake my cunning hours again,
Or build me ramparts from the dark event ?
Pale is my sun : I care not to endure.

Is it a thing that ye are sway'd
By me who spake with minds of larger mould,
Sons of the silent years whose race is low,
Inheriting their wisdom to command ?
Hereafter ye shall love me in the dust,
A late obedience, and desire my voice.
Then shall one speak above my crownless head,
" He hath ungirdled to his last repose
The sword of empire, but our after kings
Have shrunk to draw the blade and there it rusts.
And he was wise as the strong wise of eld,
No puny cackler : surely he had changed
The voice of council with the ancient wise,
And grew as these to council, who no more
Resume their strength and everlasting name."
Thus in late years perchance effectual praise
Shall reach my mansion with the frequent dead.

I have accomplish'd empire to the verge
Of mortal change, and consecrate to peace
The moments of irresolute decay.
I fail the childless father of my realm :
My memory is my sole posterity,
My deed the stable land-mark of my name.
My work, my heir ; so best, than if my race
In everlasting generation ruled
Unchallenged treasure thro' the forward years,
As gods, in firm abiding, dignified
With kingly works the children of their thought.

The old man withers : ye forget his power.
Have I not chain'd my rivals round my state,
And made the kings of nations, more than these,
Famish in burning purple for revenge ?
Have I not laid an ordinance of doom
On all resistance, task'd my foes as slaves,
And link'd their functions to a thorny curse
Of sleepless renovation ? Has this arm
Shrunk to extirpate in a mean remorse
The seed of alien armies, merciful
To my rebellious children's realm alone ?
I led your hosts and I have spoken fire
To congregated phalanx, on the edge
Of conflict, swaying like wind-furrowed reeds :
My glance was as the lifting beam of day,
Numbering the faces in their van to die.

I am old now, dismantled and declined,
And stripling feet are itching to ascend
The steps of this imperial canopy.
Shall I speak false and smoothly at the last,
Cease with a recent lie between my teeth,
Die with a smiling falsehood on my face ?
Shall I unspeak my nature for an hour ?
Such as I am ye know me and have known.
Age is untutor'd to repeal defect,
And alteration pain in ancient eyes,
Pain to dethrone old purpose at the last,
Pain to untread the ordinance of years.
Be more obedient and forgive my scorn :
Somewhat I love this people that I scorn.
Behold I guess not to whose hand ye fall ;
Obey him, prosper, leave my bones in rest.

ANCHISES

LEAVE me, my son, an hour in loneliness
On this Sicilian Eryx : my farewell
Of earth is near accomplished : I would hold
Communion with the faces of the past,
Collect my soul in memory ere I go,
And feed on shadows of the ancient years.
Here underprop thy mantle to my head,
For here the mountains have a lonely sound,
And like faint harmony the wash of sea :
Return thee in an hour, return, my son.

I die in a strange land : a casual grave
Where never son of mine shall talk or tread
Hereafter, and no kindred step impress
My lonely bones. I have left my fathers' urns
As far behind me as the rising sun,
To measure distance by the painful sense
Of travel to the pausing limbs of age.

I do remember when my country fell,
They snatch'd me thro' the tumult to the ships.
Æneas strode before them, many a Greek
That barr'd his passage died : but my old blood
Glow'd not to see them fall, as in the days
When battle lit my soul like maiden's lips,
Mine eyes were dim, I only could complain
At fair endeavour wasted to ensure
A wither'd abject from the sword to-day
Whose urn is due to-morrow, and I said :

"All is disorder'd like an ancient tale,
And the old form of time is cracked and thrown
Dishonoured by. Confusion big with death
Usurps our hearths, and draws a line of blood
Across the record of our dearest hours.
There is no further sorrow to endure,
No tear beyond what I have seen to-day :
Thrust me in mercy thro' and let me rest
In Trojan earth : most old am I to change
My country : ye are young, your years are sweet,
But mine are very weary : what reward
Of voyage mine except a stranger grave ?

A scratch will end me : 'tis an easy boon.
Is it no bitter thing, this ancient frame
Condemned upon the threshold of its dust,
To ride the wild heads of the hollowed waves,
The lapse and weather of the scaling seas
When all discomfort multiplies an ache
Of waning years, stiff burden in themselves.'
But they or heard me not or would not heed

Thence, in the curving buffet of the tide,
Our keels have girdled half the seas in quest
Of visionary kingdoms, with reward
Of infinite misfortune to our hands.
We set the sail for other thrones, beyond
The sea-mark of the rolling spheres in heaven,
And found no scant of danger or of death ;
But reap this sole unenvied royalty,
To be the chief of mortals that endure.

O steadfast son of thine unstable sire,
Dost thou misdoubt the shielding God's command,
That led thee out among tumultuous seas,
Still pointing onwards? Oracle of heaven,
Care dost thou build us, in each port new care :
Where is that utmost haven of thy word?
Peace, be content, old heart, what shouldst thou do
With future? Cheat no longer closing eyes
With lust to see the kingdom of thy son.

In the next valley or beyond the stars
'Tis one to me : my wounded life admits
No interim to reach it : here I pause.

No farther : be it then : my way is done.
Turn, ancient eyes, turn backwards ere your sleep ;
I, the old man, would number back the years
Of all my flower and strength and nery prime,
Heroic—once heroic and thus now.
Erase, old heart, the staining years between,
Face thy great hours once more, then cease to beat :
Nay, rather let large silence hold the past :
Its changeless veil removes not for the moan
Of retrospect, and weak it were to fear
Immutable conclusion wholly best.

Behold my son returns, and I will smooth
 These doubtings from my face: enough for me
 The question and the anguish: this were shame,
 To dash his living purpose with the taint
 Of this my palsied fancy and mistrust—
 Courage, my son, to-morrow we will spread
 New sails, the land of promise sure is near.
 If my breath hold till sunrise I will sail
 Not less than the young soldier in the fleet:
 If I have slept by then, large choice of grave
 Is here upon the beach: but sail not less,
 My spirit leading to the fated land.

ARIADNE

LO, at my feet this ocean, and the moon
 Is shaking out her splendours on its fields.
 The spring is sighing up beneath the earth,
 And settles in the winter of my soul
 With tumult and with impulse, but no joy.
 The mountain streams are reeling to the sea,
 They make a voice on night beyond the wind.
 I question with the wilderness of stars
 For comfort. These eternal pinnacles
 That toss the striding Neptune from their walls
 Have heard the protest of my lonely tears.
 There is a cliff that wrestles like a god
 Alone in waters, for the waves have rent
 His brothers down behind him, and alone
 Cinctured with mutinous discord evermore
 He feels the teeth of everlasting surge
 Eat out by inch his earth-roots till he fall.
 Even such a weary purpose is my life,
 Opposing isolation, tho' it knows
 An hourly gaining sentence at its core.

Is there no rest? surely in craggy bowers
 Apart from moonlight rest the dissonant waves:
 The sea-mew builds in rifted silence there,
 And makes her brood a safety: whom her mate
 Will not relinquish though the open seas
 Invite the sinew of his reaching wing.

Patience is half ignoble in much wrong.
 These gods, that vex our wretchedness, exact
 This further torment, that the victim's lip
 Tell not its pain but bless them for their curse.
 These, while the surfeit of prosperity
 Crowds all their altar-steps with hecatombs,
 Forbid the wretched franchise to complain.

This man—this hero—for he wore the name
 Gilded with deeds in Crete, and lack'd the heart
 Heroic, masking guilt in smoothest show—
 This eminent concealment of dishonour,
 Theseus, the name will burn my uttering lips,
 I brand thee rich in worship as a slave
 Whose hands are full of lies and infamy.
 Be demigod in shallow Hellas still:
 'Tis the world's process to make great men small
 And worship draff, and kneel to ready knaves
 Who steal an empty throne, and seated cry,
 "I am a god, come, worship!" and men come.

So rule in Athens, Theseus, and the herd
 Shall burn their abject incense to thy state.
 Be lawgiver of nations : blazon out
 Thy virtue : state has seasons of repose
 And breathing for the actor, intervals
 Secure of note, to revel out the wrong
 Most native to thy nature and resume
 The Theseus I have known thee, brave alone
 In cheating foolish maidens from their homes,
 And leaving death most ready to their hands
 When thou art weary, hero, and away.

So let me live though weary of myself,
 To thee at least dishonour. Silent years
 May dim my features on thy memory :
 But not that long eternity of time
 Can sweeten thought and record of my wrong,
 Enduring in the pauses of thy brain
 When idler themes are absent. I have said :
 And through the shout of thy triumphant hour
 A whisper of my name shall tear thee down,
 And teach thee what thou art, though men acclaim
 Thy glories to the citadel of God.

Enough of thee : be faithful to thyself :
 Poison more lives and banish all thy rest.
 But I perforce live on, perforce consume
 The barren gift of breath, and watch the years
 To winter ; whom the folding of a flower,
 The burning dew-drop, sudden daffodil,
 The golden weather dropt among the woods,
 Affect with no delight : all pleasant things
 Are equal apathies.

O rest and peace,
 Fabled beyond the sunset, equal gods,
 Dare I entreat you thus with sleepless eyes
 And such a seething heart ? Ye will not come :
 The perfume of immortal asphodel
 Pervades your meadows, and ye will not come.
 To me the moaning seas and barren strand
 Must minister their comfort, and the sounds
 Of nature recompense the absent voice
 Of human consolation. I have seen
 The slow wave wear the rugged cliff to smooth,
 The weak rain batter out eternal stone :
 Where nought endures shall oly sorrow build
 An ageless throne above the fallen years ?

THE NEW AHASUERUS

WHERE is the rest and whither all this tending ?
 To be infirm and feel it in the beat
 Of streaming waters that would tear thee down.
 Where is the rest ? Oh, not in nature's face,
 For her divine revealments and repose
 Are only contrast to the craving sting
 Of inward agitation. Here at least
 Upon this central alpine pinnacle
 The weary day arises once again
 In all its beauty, sheathed with glossy cloud.
 The stars are moving to their still desire :
 The pale mist zones one trembling orb : the capes
 Are lovely, and their snowy spiral throng
 Sharpens in morning ; thro' that ample calm

The low fresh fields are hushed in crystal air :
The shining ledges flash : the bordered shales
In rippling specks evolve celestial light,
And glaze the rocks with motion : the light herb
Grasps them, inhaling increase at the sun,
And so endures a season its delight
Of arching skies, so withers. As I gaze,
In silence the innumerable veils
Descend in roseate drift : aspiring shafts
Glisten in rose to meet them, till the sun
Is broadly imminent, and changes all.
Then the firm-seated mirror of the morn
Weighs on some lonely flakes becalmed among
The liquid depth unclouded, and the shine
Breaks, tears, and pastures out their streamy spires,
Erasing all their station vein by vein,
Till the great round burns silent and alone,
Ruling his baffled rivals from his seat,
To leave the unfolded interval of Heaven
Silent through all her precincts as a dream.

But what to me the glory and the strong
Emotion? I have wandered through the earth,
And always borne a curse upon my heart,
Darkening the order of celestial change :
So not the mild accord of vernal bird,
So not the deeds that reach us from the dead
To chide our lax endeavour, not the breath
Of some heroic trumpet in the past,
So not the thought that moves us to contend
When life is young with us, from native love
Of motion for itself,—not these, not all
Can draw delight upon a blasted thing.

My road is yonder in the devious vales,
At times it glistens like a silver thread :
At times the mist is kindled as a dust
And sweeps between. So onward, till the end.
The longer pause becomes an agony
That makes this forward toil with all its pain
A preferable evil. Fall on fall,
The mountain stream has instinct towards the sea,
Her great ulterior rest. What hope is mine,
To make me wrestle with the flinty bands
That sting my weary footsteps to no goal?

ROSAMOND

HE moved among his captains to the wine,
 The revel deepened with the downward day :
 By bench and column huge barbarian lengths
 Round tankards threw a sprawl of chaining arm
 And hugg'd their gleaming poison, with fierce eyes
 Fiercer between the draughts. One leant : one lay :
 One thundered out a Rhætian battle-field
 Half-cancell'd in the anarchies of time,
 Whereon he dealt decision like a god.
 One half in shade, gigantic shadow, slept,
 And some ill vision writhed his nostril's edge
 And made his face a tumult, as his teeth
 Ground audibly, and clenched the massive hands.
 And one with fewer years and ambered hair
 Told all the sweetness of his lady's eyes
 To some gray swordsman on his brand declined,
 Deaf to the burning word and all the rout,
 But gazing with cold orbs on something far
 Beyond the banquet and the banquet noise.
 And most sat level at the lengthened board,
 Intent alone on revel-moving wine.

And royal Alboin feasted, chief of men,
 And held his state encanopied beyond
 In crimson splendours, like a flushing cloud
 Above the secret morning : larger he
 And mightier than the congregated peers
 Of all the Lombard army : he had drained
 Huge draughts Falernian to his idol gods,
 Who gave him pleasant seat among a land
 Of waters and of summits for his own,
 And lovely Pavia to his lordly rest.
 And then the fierce and cheating spirit of wine
 Made proud his heart. He looked upon his men
 And he believed himself invincible,
 Till rolling out his arrogant words he said :

“Princes and Leaders of the Lombards, hear,
 Have I not led you to a pleasant land ?
 Who hath withstood our armies for a day ?
 We conquer all things with a careless hand :
 The blast and forward shadow of our tread
 Compel the strength of triple-cinctured towns,

And hide their men in marshes : desolate
The streets : their riches ready to our hands.
And now, behold, our large prosperity
Is founded stable as the careless hills
That wind and storm unroot not like their pines.
Much meat is ours in safety till the end
From flocks and cattle in uncounted vales :
What stint of revel when a hundred hills
Are ours, and all their vineyards to our cheer?
Wisely are we descended to these plains :
In frozen hills what empire ? to dispute
Uncouth dominion in the hungry north,
This was the slender wisdom of our sires :
And we are gods to these, that in their day
Did well, as wisdom went, but we are more,
The braver fruitage of a fatter soil.
Their gods have given them rest among their snows,
And conquest to their sons with lordly ease. *
I pledge the memory of their silent years :
Have I no nobler vintage than the last,
No choicest warmth of concentrated fire,
No vine-blood rare as gold ? For I would crush
The purple essence of Italian heaven
To pledge them in our best since we have thriven.
Nay—while the grateful riot of their praise
Burns in my pulses to a deeper thirst,
I drink it and it trickles to my core—
I feel an evident and conquering god.
I will not pledge them in unmeaning gold,
The cup shall be more worthy than the praise,
More precious than the wine, a royal bowl :
Bring forth the lordliest beaker of my store,
The skull of Cunimund—here wrought the brain
That planned me frequent death—it holds my wine !
So fall my foes. There is no fitter cup
To pledge our fathers in eternal sleep.
Refill it yet : shall I believe the wine
Has drawn a vengeance-relish from the bone,
Gliding, as love's soft kiss between my lips,
To light a nobler tumult in my heart ?
Refill again—go bear it to the Queen,
Bid her rejoice among us with her sire :
Ay, by my country's gods she *shall* rejoice ;
Have I not sworn it—can I not compel ?
Were it the blood of her detested sire,
Shall she not taste a vengeance to *my* foe ?”

He ended in a tumult of acclaim :
 So fierce the wine had stung them to a thirst
 Of brutal exultation, cruelties,
 And devil-vengeance : but the wiser few
 Shuddered and sickly pushed their goblets by,
 Waiting the issue. Helmichis alone,
 Who bare the armour of the Lombard King,
 Sate with the clouded thunder of his brow
 Silent yet ripe to glisten into sound :
 So fierce his breathing laboured, towards his brand
 His touch went eager fingering out the blade
 An inch, but let it linger for the event.

They bore the charnel tankard to the Queen ;
 She sate among her ladies at the loom.
 Before the beat of nearing steps their laugh
 Ceased, as the birds cease music ere a storm.
 She glanced surprise upon them, with pressed palms.
 She moved not in emotion beautiful,
 As beautiful as thought : her gliding eyes
 Of resolute azure failed not : some light cloud
 Of doubt in floating wrought as light a shade,
 And touched the rose confusion of her cheek
 To curves that spoke command upon her lip,
 One only fleck on her divine repose :
 Until she heard the mandate, and beheld
 The ghastly token of the hollow brow
 She loved so well, and its ignoble use,
 Linked with her own constraint most horrible.
 Then as a watcher by a summer sea,
 With rosy clouds behind it, may perceive
 The landscape instant thickened, and white force
 Tear down the ripple with an undertone
 Of hoarse and ominous mischief, so intense
 The large waves cannot lift their mounded rage,
 And all the emerald weather's cope serene
 Blackens and is transfigured—So her face
 Changed and her pale lips trembled : her deep eyes
 In tremulous shimmer, counterchanged with glare
 Of rushing lights, came wildly : the light hands
 Worked, as with deathbed clutches ; thro' her frame
 One seething shudder's long continuons creep
 Convulsive shook her nature to its core.
 Nor yet her proud will failed of self-command
 In that excessive and tumultuous sting
 Of pain and bitter wronging keen as death :

One moment and she crushed her weakness down,
And masked unrest with most unnatural calm,
And feigned obedience in her wild revolt
Of love and instinct ; she controlled her voice
To speak smooth words ; then with some meek incline
Tenderly raised the skull in filial hands,
And bowed her fair lips meekly to the rim.
But scarcely let the feel of that loathed wine
Moisten upon them : shuddering then she ceased
And murmured faint, " Let my lord's will be done."
Yet ere she gave again the cup, she took
Its bony seams upon her lips, and thrice
She kissed it, thrice and closely ; and these went
And bare it to Alboin : she remained
Silent among the silence of her maids,
To weave again with shuddering hands the loom,
And never shed one tear or spake a word,
And a great silence settled in her bower.

But when the pale light strengthened out its day,
Remorse on Alboin fell when that ill cheer
Of wine had left him, and he knew her wrong
Was bitter, most malignant : since her soul,
Proud in its least obedience, must recoil
From that excessive test in burning shame.
And the King thought to make her some amends,
But being proud endured not to unsay
The tumid folly of his feasting hours :
And, tho' he wished, said nothing for the day ;
So left the wrong to fester unatoned.

But she arose from slumber's restless mock
Of raging dreams : one purpose of revenge
Possessed her life : all other thought became
Vassal to one endeavour's sole command.
Then sent she forth and summoned Helmichis ;
To her imperial summons he repaired,
And guessed the import of her sending now :
And when he came she looked into his eyes,
And took his hand and held it as she spake :

" Dost thou remember the old days that were,
Before this King had placed me at his side
By right of conquest when my father fell.
No maiden choice was mine but to obey.
The mock of insolent conquest I assumed
Detested queendom at a victor's hand :

Surely I owe my tyrant lord much love.
 But when I dwelt a girl with Cunimund,
 And moulded fancies in my father's halls,
 One came and whispered love, and that was thou :
 Those days are dust and Alboin came between,
 He made an orphan where he sought a bride,
 And rooted out my race to speed his vows :
 And fancied, as he dragged me at his wheels,
 Submission was a nobler thing than love.

" I was his queen, and I endured this curse
 Some years without complaint. I will endure
 No longer : patience falters at the last.
 Last night he planned strange insult at his wine,
 Disgrace no daughter ever bare and throve
 Thereafter and forgave it : such fierce shame
 As makes submission infamy, and tears
 Allegiance from the empty name of wife.
 I have sworn a stedfast oath that he shall die.
 Why should this tyrant trample on more souls,
 Swell like a god in his impunity?
 And if those former vows of thine endure,
 If change has been as silent in thy heart
 As mine through all the turmoil of these years,
 Thine, thine shall be the hand to make me free.
 I know thee brave, I know thou lovedst me once,
 When this is done thou shalt not question long
 If then I loved again. I cannot fear
 Refusal when I look upon thy face
 Heroic and recount my utter wrong !"
 She ended, and he promised her desire :
 What could he else ? such power upon his soul
 Wrought thro' her words and earnest pleading eyes.
 Meantime, secure in his imperial halls,
 Alboin feared no vengeance for her wrong.

DÆDALUS

THE craftsman Dædalus, the slave of kings,
 Artificer of nations, instrument
 Of fools that use his fingers, and refuse
 The shelter of their gates, the drift and mock
 Of royal whim and civic insolence,
 The man of ready brain and cunning hand—
 It has not come to much this life of mine.

Yet once again an exile : there it lies,
This city which I peopled with my brain,
And fed with water from the hills, and changed
Their hovels into marble palaces,
And carved them gods to worship with the eyes
Of mortal beauty : this is my reward.
This petty tyrant thunders like a Zeus
And thrusts me out on surmise, with excuse,
"Forsooth his craft is dry, and we have reapt
His brain to stubble : let him pack and flee,
Lest he should flout us with his benefits."

Was it for this that I have pondered out
The forces of the earth, and made man strong
Beyond his puny fibre to remove
Some mountain like the Titans? As a god,
Creating power in new development,
I seated man the regent of the world :
Whom I had found a cowering slave, beneath
The cattle in endurance, walking blind
Among the helps and wonders at his feet.

It is the curse of wisdom to endure
The scorn of fools that use us when their need
Is ended ; then the brutish herd accounts
Intelligence as treason to the rule
Of universal blindness. I have seen
The noisy birds that peck to death their kind
If one of lighter plumage should intrude
Among their even blackness ; typing thus,
How men reject the spirits that presume
To leave their age behind them, and uphold
Attentive faces to the purple light
That thickens where the later sun shall tread.

For he that smooths the daily lives of men
By mere material comfort must upraise
The moral nature : as the home the man.
I have done this, have built their houses firm
And beautiful ; so taught them to provide
A better food with fire : to reap their crops,
And carve or plane the fissile woods at hand.
In softer wools I clothed them, and have drawn
The flax in closest fibre. At my hand
The sea-shell rendered up intenser stain ;
For colour works with form an equal power,
Subduing and refining thro' the world.

I must not pause to murmur, or the night
 Shall take me on the summits : I would live
 And reap, in spite of envy, the delight
 Of new creation for itself ; beyond
 I know there is no recompence : my work
 Is excellent or worthless in itself ;
 And I am weak to murmur if to-day
 Is chary of its praise, the after-time
 Will set me right. If the blind mole reprove
 The glory of the dawn shall nature cease
 Her radiance for his blindness ? I will on,
 And scorn to stint my effort till the end.
 The gods, that made me what I am, will keep
 My record and avenge me on this age.
 In Hellas there are towns enough to prove
 My use and my rejection. Chance shall guide
 My footsteps : in our energy we live,
 And all the rest is dream and accident.

NIOBE

BEHOLD I am the mother of all woes,
 An isolation on a living earth
 Of creatures meting love and loved again :
 There is no moving life that loves me left.

I dreamt that there was mercy with the gods,
 And like a child I dreamt it : for I hold
 The adder largely pitiful to these,
 He kills not but in hunger and defence
 And not for pastime : the brave Delian's bolt
 Prefers the innocent : he draws on man
 Behind his hedge of immortality
 Secure of counter aim : trim courage this.
 And noble exploit were it to besmear
 Some widow's cheeks with sorrow : to destroy
 Her orphan brood and quell the beaming eye :
 To trample trust and youth in dust and shame.
 I knew not this your right omnipotence.
 I had but heard that man's adversity
 Was something for your contemplative choir
 To gaze upon with dull incurious eyes,

As on a curious picture new no more.
 These gods have watched so many thousands die,
 Have learnt so well each phase of human pain,
 That, to relieve their leisure, they must plan
 Yet more ingenious torture : since to slay
 At once were feeble pastime, stale and old :
 Stale as that old, old prayer, monotonous,
 For something which these men have Mercy named,
 A word forbidden in the shining halls,
 Or with your dynasty of recent gods
 Disused and changed for Vengeance.

Art thou King

O Zeus, who drowsest on thy dappled clouds?
 Thou spreadest hugely on the wearied clouds :
 Dost wake to murder, as a prince to hunt,
 Clearing the fumes of nectar round thy brain
 With thunder tossed in pastime on our towns?
 Tear up the yellow harvests with thy brand,
 And cheat the hungry mouths of foodless men :
 Mock them with famine : let the slaves lick up
 The leavings of thy storm : some patch of maize
 Outstands the scathing bluster : the rained brooks
 Are drink enough, and draff and shards content
 The aches of famine till men cease, and pass
 Under the night to plague the gods no more :
 Their dole of tears is wept : thy fear no cold.

Ye thralls of meanest vengeance, tyrant gods,
 Who mar the sacred nature in her fruit,
 Who relish all disorder and unfaith,
 Whence your authority that frame such deeds?
 Ill power that put you stronger than our lives.
 But not your scorn or anger can bereave
 The freedom of the breast, that bears about
 Innate rebellion to your craven powers.
 Ye cannot silence the pale lips, that hurl
 The birthright of their protest in the teeth
 Of domineering wrong they cannot stay,
 Since some blind fate has seated wrong supreme.

Triumph in wrong, thou race of Zeus : the earth,
 Is at thy feet for carnage : run thy day
 Of tyranny, and turn thy careless eyes
 To other desolation : there is food

THE SALE AT THE FARM

For thine immortal arrows elsewhere,
 And children fair as mine in peaceful homes
 For new destruction : slacken not thy hand,
 Lest men grown happy say thy rule is done.
 It is a fruitful race this breed of man,
 And thrives by thinning : victims will not fail :
 To spare, lest this should be, were idiot fear :
 Not thy full malice shall extirpate all.

But, O ye elder race of gentler gods,
 Whom these have bound in darkness, whom the voice
 Of lamentation at the upstart Kings
 Adjures as only worthy to command ;
 As only gods in deed, tho' these prevail.
 Our hope is towards you chained beneath the world :
 We whisper that you are not conquered yet :
 That not in record human or divine
 Was evil yet eternal : tyranny
 Is doomed as soon as born, and bears about
 The seeds of sure destruction, from the germ
 Coeval with its growth ; and doomed its rule
 However long the respite of its fall.

Arise, ye Titans then, for these are weak,
 Rend out your adamant chains, and shake
 The mountains from your limbs, infirm no more
 To yield your ancient seats : resume that might
 Which girdled round the world ere these had drawn
 Their baby milk, and crush them from the sky.
 Arise, ye Titans, and avenge my tears.

THE SALE AT THE FARM

I TRUST the worst is over with this sale.
 The old place had a strange look in the crowd :
 The jostling and the staring and the creak
 Of shuffled feet, the public laugh sent round,
 The hammer's clink, the flippant auctioneer,
 Number on number lengthening out the day :
 Familiar things dishonoured, like old friends
 Set up on high to scorning fools : and then
 The ache of loss, and some dull sense that they

Would sell me last by parcels, till the dusk
Drew, in December sleet, and all were gone :
And this old wreck bowed at my drooping fire
In gathered shade unfriended and alone.
Bare walls and fixtures here : thus ends the tale.

George Barnes, the thriving farmer, warpt and shrunk
And naked to the bite of wind and wave.
On the blank threshold of his eightieth year,
Ripe for the parish union or the grave.
The man whose name was clean and word was sure,
Dishonoured : pattern farmer of the squire.
The farm of gapless hedge and pasture clean
Without a rush : I, broken, the safe man
As England's bank for credit ? when old Groves,
Who never paid a punctual rent, scrapes on,
With his lean kine, like Egypt's plagues, at grass
Where sprouts one blade of herbage to the score
Of rushes stubbled close as urchin quills.

Ye idle sons, ye false and idle sons,
A bitter ending to my careful years
Ye have devised me in your lurcher pride :
Why should ye make me homeless at the last ?
Ye knew that thrift had raised the labouring man
A fruitful farmer : your vain wits forgot
The two-roomed cottage of your schooling years ;
A labourer's sons to ape at gentlemen :
To drink and racket like the careless heirs
Of noble acres, race and ride to hounds ;
Fine clothes, French wines, ill comrades from the town :
And then to come and tell me, that I shamed
Your worships by still working with my men
In these old fields that bought you all your show.
Meanwhile your farms went wrack in bailiffs' hands,
Ye saw to nothing, stinted not, spent on :
Ye never held a plough or bound a sheaf :
Lord, I have seen you ride on harvest days,
Among the smoking reapers, spruce and cool,
Be-gloved and Sunday-coated, vain and gay
As weedy poppies among honest grain.
And so these ran their tether out like lords,
While loan and credit lasted, and one year
Had back to bear the burden of the last
And pass it to another with its own.

And so they ran their folly to the lees,
And borrowed deeper till their flash studs failed,
And I to save some shreds of our good name
Sat down at four-score beggared—so it runs.

With nought I started and with nothing end :
For I and my old dame in our young days—
Kind soul, she's best in churchyard from these tears—
From her brisk needle and my labourer's wage
Contrived to scrape a little, coin by coin,
Albeit hungry mouths were in our nest
Of growing children, and the wages low.
And after hours I wrought a patch of waste
Into a garden : many helps are found
By those who seek them like midsummer bees
Making the long days longer, and our store
Grew under wary watching like a child.
We bought a cow to pasture in the lanes ;
And since occasion helps the helpful man,
The squire's head woodman failing, I came in
Till there was picked another to their mind.
And since I felled as much at lower wage,
And since the bailiff gave me sturdy praise,
And since the squire could light on no one else,
They were content to leave this as it stood,
And no one came above me, so I throve.

And after years a leasehold farm fell in,
The homestead ruinous and the land undrained,
No specious venture ; for the dribbling term
Had thrown it lastly to a needy man
Who almost starved upon it, a poor soul
Crippled with ague and consuming sloth.
Thus an ill name, the fault of his neglect,
Clung to the farm and scared the applicants.
Till, last the steward bating of his rents,
I closed the venture, now to stand or fall.
My savings scarce could stock it at the first :
All was awry, and, rood by rood, the land
With stubborn pains reclaimed from careless years,
Set me afield before the sleeping sun.
I dyked the solid marls with sturdy zeal,
Slaved like ten ploughmen in November dwift,
And bent the stubborn fallows to my will.
But at the full fall of the leaf there came

A bitter season in my second year
With sickness to our cattle, and with pain
We barely weathered through it to the spring.
Once safely through, large store of better days
Succeeded, and above our heads the sun
Of prosperous labour held an even noon.
And days of golden plenty flowed in toil
That set an honest relish on the day,
And gleamy tints by day's unstormy fall
Gave equal promise of to-morrow calm.
And when our children and our store increased
I took this larger farm, reputed first
In all the township. I have made its name
Lose nothing in my keeping, year by year ;
I made its good yet better ; and I throve.

And as these sons grew men, I said, "The boys
Shall each be started well and have their prime
Unfettered with the clogs that kept me down.
If my tough arms and purpose seat me here,
Why should I toss these troubles to the lads
Of my probation ? they shall till their own,
And owe their labour to no man beside,
Lords of their honest strength and sinew sure."

And spoke unwisely : 'tis a perilous thing
To give a lad some choice of idleness,
And plenty carved too ready at his hand.
Better as I was : this I knew not then :

And as each son came twenty and a year,
Three sons I set them in three farms to thrive,
No farmers better started in the shire.
And thus they have repaid me, like sour weeds
That steal the room and nurture of the grain
Under whose shade and sufferance they are sprung,
And, though they strike no root themselves, contrive
To choke and waste it wholly at the last.

Alas, I erred in being generous.
I could detect no failings in my own :
I thought their hearts were right because their limbs
Were moulded fair, and light was on their face,
The rosy maskings of a feeble core.

And, one by one, they failed from off the land,
 Selfish, unstable, vain, and slothful boys.
 See these have dragged me down, and thought no shame
 To link an old man's ruin to their own,
 If so they could push back a little while
 Their imminent destruction, and secure
 Some paltry furlough for their evil ways.
 They thought it all the same to strip me now
 Or wait to wrangle at my monument.
 What matter if my few remainder years
 Be comfortably furnished, or commended
 To parish charity? old age is dull :
 A dotard could not taste much difference.
 I lodged as ill before I made your gold :
 But your nice senses are another thing,
 They shall not lack full flush of delicates.
 Shall gentlemen be shortened of their ease
 While the old clog has yet a coat to lose ?

Ay me, these troubles and this weary day
 Have loosed my tongue unduly, and revealed
 Much grievance better sealed in silent shame.
 I am so old no wound can hurt me long.
 The future smooths to one both good and blame :
 They were my own that wrought their father's fall,
 My own, tho' sinning, and these bitter words
 Are wrongly spoken by a father's tongue.
 Comfort is sure and silence in the grave,
 I can abide the bitter interval,
 As short as sour, that holds me from my rest.
 This desolation and these naked walls
 Are seen no longer, for the light is past
 From these dead embers : so when I am dead
 My thought will dwell no more on any cares.

THE LAMENT OF PHAETHON'S SISTERS

THE short-lived crocus bring and moly bloom,
 Sweet incense, gum, and odorous cedar burn,
 With roses we will strew his sepulchre,
 A vernal wreathing for a royal tomb.

Ill-fated, most presumptuous brother mine,
The gleaming chariot couldst thou dare ascend
To guide the sun-steeds, mortal charioteer?

Our father, he the unapproachable,
Phœbus, the Lord of Delos, in his sphere
Eternally surrounded by the flakes
Of awful glory—frowned at thy request,
Nor yet denied it : rashly hath he sworn
By that infernal river, which alone
Can bind the ageless gods in their despite,
That he will hear the first boon of his son.

Ah, ye our father's horses, steeds of day,
Could ye destroy this brother, to our tears?
Hence shall we no more bring you golden food,
Divine, ambrosial barley : now no more
Our hands shall love to sleek your proud necks down,
No more our wandering fingers comb your manes :
Ye have betrayed him, to our utter woe.

Then sped the bolt of Zeus, eternal King,
An irresistible vengeance on thy head,
To scorch thy wretched life, and thou wast hurled
Out on the realms of space, as falls a grain
Of sand to sound the ocean infinite.
Immeasurable depth, and falling still,
Three days among the stars, and falling still,
Blackened with lightning, towards the misty earth.

Until we found thee by the river here ;
Thy beauty scarred ; with sad distorted face :
Our love alone had known thee in that hour.

Here in the genial bosom of the mould,
Enswathed with costly cerement, choose his rest :
And we sad watchers, by its sacred rim,
Upon the crystal river weep long tears,
And thick as amber rain our sorrow down.

And sigh, as yonder margin poplars sigh,
That droop above the sedges their sere leaves ;
With these in unison shall moan the flood
A dirge for thee, beloved one, brother mine,
Ill-fated, most ill-fated brother mine.

JOAN OF ARC

IF I prevail shall any might be mine?
Lord of all conflict, is not glory thine?
I'll get me very humbly and kneel down,
And doff my myrtle chaplet at thy shrine.

I am but fit to graze a few poor sheep :
My office once, ere Mary on my sleep
Grew in a vision reaching out a crown ;
And fed my soul with dream-delight so deep,

That not full morning with her solemn breeze
Could that sweet voice unsweeten, or make cease.
God's love it seemed to melt the mountains round,
And wings of angels rustled in the trees.

O voice eternal, glory of my dream,
Blended with every wave of languid stream,
Mingling with bleat of mother-ewes thy sound,
Or whispered far as sunset's radiant seam.

Voice, in the pine boughs beaten of great hail,
Voice, in the wrestle of the wind-mill sail,
In the jay's bicker from his mountain ground,
Or in the sun-gilt insect's feeble wail,—

I knew thee loud or gentle, far or near,
On thee I brooded day and month and year ;
Till the poor herd-girl became glorified
Like an old saint with God's voice at his ear.

"What can have crazed you, girl?" my sire would say.
"What gives your eyes that bright and earnest ray?"
For I indeed was strangely beautified,
Seeing I spake with Mary every day.

"These are weak maiden dreamings, you shall wed
And clear these bubble fancies from your head.
Oh, but believe me, girls are often so,
And wives no worse, when all these whims are fled."

The village mothers came with nod and smile ;
Indeed, good souls, they vext me with no guile,
To whisper, " Where did that last vision go ?
Girl, get you wed ; you wait too long a while."

Oh, but this human love I laid it by
Without one tear. The chosen maid, should I
Weep for a little sweet much flecked with stain,
Or hold brief earth's fruition worth a sigh ?

I heard discordant voices loud in hate
Between two village lovers wedded late ;
Never shall these go hand in hand again ;
May shall return, but not their old estate.

Love ! What was love to me, when lordly France
Lay desolate as one in mortal trance ?
Beautiful mother, how for dead she lay !
And, when the alien rider with his lance

Pierced her bright helpless bosom, as she slept,
She only moaned a little while, and kept
Her eyelids calm in sleep. But wailing they,
Her daughters fainted, as they watched and wept.

The vine lay broken in its time of flower,
The grey dry field had lost her harvest power ;
Darkness prevailed, and cloud of blood-red flame,
Heads full of languor, all hearts beating slower.

The shadow of thy death lay full on me,
Who in thy travail dared to comfort thee ;
Surely thy wail was mighty ; but none came
Except the peasant girl of Domremi.

They fled, the lordly captains of thy pride,
Who sat at wine with thee in thy good tide.
Each splendid warrior left thee, clothed in beams,
Who smiled so grandly, at his lady's side

Disdaining fear, and trifling her white hand.
They saved thee none, these proud ones, O my land.
They jested at the inn-maid, and her dreams ;
How is their valour fallen away like sand !

Thence is my glory travail to these lords ;
My myrtle sweetens up in light ; their words
Are wind, their boasting laughter ; so that these
Would joy to bind me round with prison cords,

And sell me to the alien. But God's eyes
Save me and search unsleeping their device.
So in the midst of death I take full ease,
And let them vex their hate with devil lies.

In truce, they pass me with averted head
Or whispered sneer ; but, as the fight grows red,
Be thou my witness, Mary mine, how these
Creep to the shadow of my sword in dread,

Crying, "O maid, our wretched soldiers flee,
Rally and lead them up. In all but thee
Our hope is broken, and fair France will cease
Out from the kingdoms perished utterly !"

God knows, the trampled war with furnace breath
Seemed meadowy silence set with elms, beneath
Warmed of slow breezes, when some vision stood
Before my steed flashing the pale Christ's death.

Or sudden blue eyes of the virgin's face
Grew on the ramparts in the storming place,
And smiled me up past iron men and blood ;
How easy then to win the breach ! Her gaze

And sweet mild voice among the ringing swords
Came only to her maid in gracious words.
Sustained to such high comfort could I yield
To some poor brutish soldier ; whose rough lords

Haled him from wine-cups and worse revellings
To be my triumph ; whom the yellow wings
Of angels shaded in dry autumn field ;
And unseen fingers at my armour strings

Continually lightened the strange toil
And chafe of morion, with sweet holy oil
Bathing my maiden brows ; so I rode on
Greatly rejoicing ; tho' the cracked white soil

Lay sick and gaping in fierce steamy blight,
And the glare seethed the hollow land like blight,
And all fair leaf was poisoned for much sun ;
I, onwards riding, knew not for delight.

Since on my lips some pure stream never dry
Came with remembrance of moist herbs thereby,
With scent of bays that trail leaves in its run,
And grey shelves dripping on continually.

By Mary's aid I rode with keen sweet air,
Where the lark fainted up in heaven for glare,
Where my steed trod to sulphur-dust the ground
Of burning pastures paler than despair.

Yet, God he knows, the flesh itself was weak,
And how for ruth my handmaids could not speak,
If, easing off at night my helm, they found
The eating iron dints on brow and cheek ;

They wept ; mere girls and foolish rose-red flowers
Whose blind brief loves made worship for their hours,
Fit to trill little songs about a rose,
Or trim their raiment up in latticed bowers,

And cackle, and lean heads at some boy knight
Mincing along in samite, curled and bright—
Ah, lord, I never set my heart with those,
Who yearn to taste ere death the bride's delight.

Sweet is the trouble of the child ; and sweet
To guide the baby hand and feeble feet.
The fair light softens in a mother's eyes
To cherish on her breast its helpless heat.

I held love cheaper than the patient dead ;
Lonely I followed where thy visions led ;
Nor made God weary with sick looks and sighs,
But went with gleaming eye and festal tread.

As morning greatens into gold from rose,
As a gale fresh with orchard fragrance blows,
As organ-waftings thro' some minster door,
Thy message and thy breath in my repose

Whispered, "Arise in armour," and right fain,
As some king treads the vintage of the slain,
I went alone, and on the wine-press floor
My maiden feet were red with onset stain.

As some high captain clad in battle gear
Leaning at even on his deadly spear,
I, the mere maiden of an inn before,
Grew great to shatter kingdoms with my fear.

Therefore I said, thou art low, but God most great,
Mighty to bruise down strong ones in their state,
Calls from her flocks some mean and simple maid,
And breathes into her arm a Titan weight.

Is not all strength his doing and his own ?
Even the glorious seraphs near his throne,
If God forgot to strengthen them, would fade
Abolished, in their place no longer known.

He feeds them with his face and they are bright.
He turns him and they perish. In his sight
The ancient stars are glad : the sun arrayed
To burn along the pathway of his might.

He shall remember and forget not one.
He binds into its orbit many a sun ;
Allows the daisy fringes vernal red,
And folds away the flower when day is done.

He binds the broken weed up with his balm.
The sons of pride are crushed beneath his arm.
The iron hills are melted at his tread,
But on the worm his shower and light are warm.

Thou royal of my land without a throne,
France, O sweet mother, cheated from thine own,
Betrayed of laggard sons, who groaned outworn,
"God's anger smites our cities one by one ;

Therefore hang up thy spear and give him way.
Who may resist his vengeance for a day ?
His fury will not falter, tho' we mourn ;
If we go out against him he will slay."

Who gave his incense up to God for thee?
God answered no great abbot on his knee.
Such voices found a shepherd maid at morn
Down in the pleasant fields at Domremi.

So once as strangely had God's might appeared.
Hill fronting hill the rival camps lay reared
Who slew Gath's Titan save a shepherd boy,
While strong Saul kept his tent and Israel feared?

So I, God aiding, of no might my own
Have trampled this invading giant down,
And set my heel upon him to destroy,
As some great angel bruises the snake's crown.

O great King, fair and noble, my poor hand
Could lead thee to thy crowning and command.
"March on, my lord ; the God we glory in
Will lead us scathless thro' a hostile land."

How dumb the armies lay on either side.
No clarion blew or banner floated wide ;
Their limbs dissolved beneath them, tranced in sin,
They saw the terrible God, whom they defied,

Lead thro' their ranks his chosen void of fear.
They rose ; their trembling hands refused the spear.
No sound of fight assailed our sacred band.
No arrow flew against us. God was near.

So, as in golden silences of dreams,
We journeyed onwards by the happy streams,
By blue small hills like flowers about the land,
Till in the distance, lo, the gates of Rheims.

Then we rode in thro' lanes of beaming eyes,
O'er roses strewn like sea-plains at sunrise,
Under gay windows rocking with acclaim,
Till the cathedral, keen on crisp grey skies,

Uprose in many pinnacles before
Our yearning eyes ; wide lay each monster door
Set with stone saint-guards ; under these we came
On cooler air, and dim great burnished floor ;

Vast column'd spaces full of sound and blaze ;
 The pealing organ and the incense haze ;
 The concourse surging, as when shafted flame
 Smites down among the restless ocean-ways.

There in the midst I set him throned in light
 Ruler indeed of nations. On his right
 I stood in full steel clothed, and over me
 Displayed the sacred ensign ; where God's might

Easily held the islands in his palm,
 The rounded heaven, the long light ocean-calm,
 Yea, as babe-fingers hold a ball, so he.
 And all the banner edge was bloom of warm

And dove-bright lilies pure as Heaven's own—
 Then I reached out and laid on him his crown,
 Shed oil, and gave him orb and sceptre-wand,
 Regent of God, whom none should trample down.

Then all my soul was bathed in large delight ;
 Kneeling to clasp his knees, my sense and sight
 Failed in a rush of triumph pure and grand,
 Among the hymns, the incense, and the light.

My consummation this. I should have died.
 Earth gives no more till Heaven's gate open wide.
 I have lived and done my joy, content to cease,
 And ease me from the armour of my pride.

I will return, resuming ancient days,
 To those few sheep along the mountain ways.
 My very soul is hungry after peace :
 Resume, O Lord, thy sword, accept my bays.

Note. The return of Joan from Rheims in July, 1429, is taken as the period of this sketch, since it seems the acme of her success, before her self-faith had been shaken by reverses and captivity.

MACHIAVEL IN MINIMIS

I TURN the puzzle over, side by side
 Set all its myriad facets to the light,
 State and re-state it. Still the clue eludes.
 Who can work nature out in diagrams ?

Or cast the fluid essence volatile
Of human motive flawless into moulds
Of statist theory? Clear flows the stuff,
Till meeting with a sand-grain all runs wrong,
Spoilt in an instant, ruined by a hair;
And we bend grimly to our toil again.
There's my solution written clean and clear,
No letter wrong, not one erasure seen,
The periods flowing as a rill of oil.
Shut in my desk it seems a perfect thing:
Put it in action, and some wretched fly
Tangles himself against it for a whim,
And all goes out of gear. It worked so smooth
Till some fool-passion touched the intricate wheels
And wrecked itself and them. Man still eludes
Logic and computation like weak cloud.
He will not be consistent, this poor beast;
And I complain, that on no certain plan
Will he ordain existence. Virtue's well,
And Vice affords some grist to nature's mill.
So, man, be good or evil once for all.
Each scheme of life presents peculiar charm.
But, being evil, why slide back to saint,
Or being saint, relapse to sinner's ways?
That's what this fatuous human nature does.
Man, ever-veering, fails in either part;
Makes quite a sorry milk-and-water fiend,
Or drapes himself in paltry angel plumes,
And snuffs for carrion in the nearest hedge.
Who can put rule to such a thing as he?
Could I not master with an easy hand
A devil legion true to devil law,
Or sweet obedient seraph-birds of heaven?
But this thing looking both ways, going none,
Remorseful in his murder, tyrannous
In his best loving; false as hell to a wife,
And constant to a harlot as a dove.
Merry at church, and in a wine-vault sad,
How shall I build a science of his soul?

There's one type here and there I understand.
Take this lean kneeling monk, who scores his knees
Into a gristle with the sharpest flints
Pegged close as mussel-bed between the tides,
Who gauges saintship by lean flesh and dirt.

And there's some burning purpose in that other,
 Who takes and sucks the orange of all sin
 Clean dry in spite of thunder, and makes mouths
 At the big eyes of the indignant priests.
 Oh, I could frame a science of the world
 Time-proof and out of shot of accident,
 If only and if always men as these
 Were black and white about it ; but confound
 These neutral greys unfit for heaven or hell.

Here am I, statist and philosopher,
 Just paid enough to wrap my bones and feed.
 Who pull the strings of this great booby duke,
 Manage the nobles, give the mob their cue,
 When they may roar for charters with success.
 Rule this small realm by balancing the three
 Against each other with a wary thumb,
 Being an unseen providence almost
 To all and each, but reaping thanks of none.
 Thus in the game of government play men,
 Like chess, except your pieces won't keep still,
 Stir of themselves, if you but turn your head,
 Will not be passive. Why should this pert knight
 Move, no word given, within the castle's reach,
 And suicidal, rush upon his doom?
 He saw one yard around him in the smoke,
 Having no glimpse how fared the outer fight,
 Where the foe queen lay helpless 'twixt a pawn
 And her poor king's exposure. Much he knew :
 While the whole battle-plan beneath mine eyes
 Lay mapped and meted like a pasture plain.
 Or state my troubles in another view—
 Mankind is here in that weak infant stage
 When it just totters but can't go alone ;
 Is fractious if you aid it, wails the more
 If, when the stumble comes, your arm don't catch
 And interpose at the instant. You look on,
 Preaching of balance, how to plant the feet,
 Till, using your tuition to escape,
 Some weary hour souse goes the sullen child
 Into the nearest horse-pond ; chokes and roars
 To you, who pull it out and cleanse its rags,
 And curse the pains you took to get it in ;
 Since in its crawling state it always kept
 A dry skin till you taught it.

A sweet life !

And sweetly grateful service, you may say ;
And surely sweet example they assume,
These many masters mine, to imitate
The licence of the shoaling forest-flies ;
Who cloud your head, and with your moving move,
And madden you with droning undersong
And feeble sting. My legion rulers these ;
My Lord in chief another, that's the Duke,
Whom 'tis my gracious duty to direct
From a state-paper to a love-affair ;
That vacuous thing, arch-dotard of the herd,
That most uncertain blockhead, "Charlemagne
In council and in bravery Roland."
So ran the late address, a birthday thing,
Presented by the council of the town,
Phrased somewhat neatly. I composed it all,
And taught them how to speak it end to end.
As, in a ducal and less flowing style,
I wrote the answer of our gracious Lord ;
Which in the reading he was pleased to change
To dismal nonsense. Well, that audience done,
The crassest alderman must pluck my robe,
Draws down a serious mouth and whispers me,
To this effect ; "I meddle over-much,
Clerk as I am of no degree and mean,
Between the people and the awful throne ;
Let me beware." His neighbour caught the cry
To the same tune : another civic light
Snorted approval, stared with oozy eyes
Glazed over with a weak malevolence ;
Essayed to speak, but only gurgles came
From that throat eloquent ; and all this coil
Arose, because one pushing alderman
Wished to intrude his daughter, Lammas last,
About the duchess as a tiring-wench.
And I, who read this daughter at a glance,
Brewer of mischief, in suave sort declined,
In our o'erstocked menagerie of cats,
To introduce another of the breed,
So promising already in the rough.
Well, to return, I listen, rub my hands ;
Bow to the burghers ; hope I know my place,
Smile as I watch them stumbling down the stairs,
Muse for a space. Another taps my sleeve,
The audience usher, the dude waits, I go,

Knowing the leader of his people sends
Most graciously intending, in his turn,
To wipe his sacred buskins for an hour
Upon the trivial carcase of his slave.
Which comes to pass exactly as I said ;
His Highness rates me with a heated face ;
The burghers' speech has rubbed him the wrong way,
Seems less effusive than last birthday's one,
When our grain crops were beaten less by scuds,
And native woollens beat the Flemish looms.
Then one seditious rumour frets his soul,
Was ever worthy ruler plagued as he ?
The thing was nothing, a mere *contretemps*,
About a damsel he had noticed once.
Such things will happen—noticed, mind, I say ;
No further. But thereon the silly child
Must choose to wail and moan about our streets,
And utter, Lord knows what, best left unsaid.
The weaker sort caught up her idle tale,
And spread it, till one trivial accident
Had made men's loyal feelings limp and lean.
The duke was pleased to vent all this on me,
Blameable somehow for his merry hours ;
I stood a-shiver, like a coatless man
Caught in a good ripe drench of harvest rain
Upon a treeless common. He stormed on
Merrily, till it ended ; all must end.
I stumble backwards from the inner shrine
Dazed with the thunder of this royal Jove.
Crossing the ante-room I'm caught again,
The Countess Emma wants a word with me,
Will take denial none. I needs must go ;
Because our duke esteems her ladyship,
Consults her much—of course on state affairs—
In short, you'd best be well with her just now.
Tho' perhaps a month or two shall change all that.
Well, there's a tedious tale of when and how,
Of ways and tears and means. These female scrapes
Disgust me most. They're so illogical.
I could instruct them, if they'd come to me,
How to be twice as bad at half the risk,
And still to sin with some consistency
About their scheme of sinning. As it seems,
Some distant cousin of her countess-ship,
The sex is immaterial to the tale—
Must have at any price relays of cash.

She tries her teasing ways upon the duke.
 But his exchequer runs at grievous ebb ;
 Until one certain evening, having dined,
 More to be rid of her than anything,
 He gave her, or allowed her to divest,
 Certain crown-jewels that he happed to wear.
 The case lay sweetly in a nutshell thus.
 No goldsmith in this loyal burgh would buy ;
 He dared not melt and could not sell the gear.
 Besides his Highness might not well recall
 The details of their giving : who would deal
 In wares that savoured of the axe and cord ?
 One thing was certain. Money must be found.
 And blood is much, tho' distant be the kin.
 She ends in weeping as a thing of course.
 Then in one instant I discern my way.
 This trash must fall or my court days are done.
 This tangle must disroot herself or me.
 Hail ! thou great glow of conflict, action hail !
 My blood warms for the first time in the day.
 Here is a thing to do, a road to tread,
 As clear as noon-light. Exquisite and clean
 This action with a precipice all round
 But one way. Forward in sweet confidence !
 The doubts that vex our science are as dead
 As Saint Paul's viper.

I don't push her out
 Of any malice, mind. She is as well
 As she will be who treads into her shoes.
 But she has woven a knot I dare not break ;
 Therefore I know she will hate me, plan my fall ;
 So my resolve is taken, I decline
 To intermeddle with her jewel sales.
 She weeps, entreats, and threatens finally,
 As I expected. Then I speak indeed
 My word of power and quell her at one blow
 Within an hour his Highness must be taught
 Who battens on the jewels of his crown.
 As for herself, all harvest hence is spoiled.
 Let her pack up her bundles and begone,
 A cheated jealous Jove is apt to flash
 In formidable ire, unmerciful.
 Might it not peril her smooth neck to stay ?
 And one hour's law I even gave her then,
 Gave her this space to outwit me, if she dared

Being curious on the surmise, if she could
 Summon the needful courage. I believe.
 I love the sciences political
 Beyond my personal danger. Not at all ;
 She is a low poor creature, fierce enough
 With the game hers, but prostrate at a blow.
 She flies. We hang the cousin out of hand ;
 And, out of sheer compassion, I procure
 A pension for her. Tho' the duke storms out,
 That I am false to ask it for the jade,
 But finally concedes it. Off she goes
 To her castle in the vineyards ; where she milks
 Two cows and goes to chapel twice a day,
 And takes her serving-maids on stipulation
 That they should see no sweethearts. R. I. P.,
 As they say in the grave-yards.

To my task,
 I am grown garrulous indeed to-night.
 I think at seasons I am ageing fast.
 What ! midnight chimes, and with the morning comes
 The knavish envoy of the neighbour throne.
 And I must have my wits in sweetest gear ;
 His cormorant kingdom snatches at our land,
 And preys upon our matches half-way round,
 Would quarrel on a nutshell if she could.
 She is strong and we are crafty. Let her come ;
 I can subdue her in a paper war
 And drive her from the field with argument.
 Suppose it comes to fighting. Well, that goes
 Beyond my province. I've philosophy
 To face the issue ; cosmopolitan,
 I have no land, my science is the world.

MUTATION

IF but a little while the flowers are new
 Till broken over-ripenly with great dew,
 Shall Love remain untarnished till his close,
 Clear in his depth, heart-perfect like a rose ?

Yet, O my love, one little changeful year
 O'er Amor's laughing eyes will render serene
 The pretty petals, and uncrimson soon
 The brave new posies garlanded in June.

If I have led thee in sweet way of flowers,
If we have heard the dove's voice answer ours,
Where the sharp woods grew mellow nearer noon,
Shall love endure more than the cuckoo's tune?

If I have pastured at thy lips as well
As the bee trembles at the asphodel,
Are their ripe bloom and tender incense breath
Secure alone from stain of dust and death?

Love in his sheaf has bound us breast to breast,
Why reason sourly at his harvest feast ;
Or seek for ashes under every rose
That cinctures round his beaming tresses close?

And yet, dear heart, this phantom clothed in fear,
Makes not in dearness thee one shade less dear ;
And I will hunger for more love indeed,
If love be briefer than a wayside weed.

I will not leave my ruler, tho' his reign
Change as a rose or like a crescent wane.
What answer shall we render, sweet, to these
Who hate our Lord, because his rule shall cease?

Say, with thy sweet lip rested under mine,
"Lord of an hour, thou only art divine."
Sing, while I feel the perfume of thy breath,
"Love is eternal and more strong than death."

A HEATHEN TO HIS IDOL

IN TIME OF PEACE

By the gold bosses drilled in thy feet,
By the stones shedding flame at thine eyes,
By the canopied weft of thy seat,
By the blood, by the censer,—arise !

Ah, lord, thou art not as the rest,
Poor idols, that falter at need :
Thou art cased up in gold to each breast
Strung over with jewel and bead.

Gods needy our neighbours obey,
Lean idols, whose altars are bare :
Their faces are rusted and grey,
The spider weaves over their hair.

They are needy, their brows gather gloom :
They abide in the breath of reproof,
Under fanes without colour or room,
Where the rain-drop eats into the roof.

They are cold in unlovely abodes.
They are feeble and molten with fear.
They pine for the clashing of odes.
They faint for the blood of the steer.

They dwell in dim houses and pine.
Their singers are weary to come.
The lamp flickers out in their shrine.
Their wizards are sleepy and dumb.

Thou art scanted in nought for a god.
We tend thee a house that is sweet.
Thou hast anklet and armlet, and shod
With ivory sandals thy feet.

Thy bountiful hair like a fleece,
Outflows by a fathom thy chair.
O Idol, O god, let thy peace
Descend as a rain that is fair.

O wonderful image we serve,
Uphold in thy counsel our seat ;
Establish, redeemer, preserve ;
Not in vain let us slay thee thy meat.

We have given thee cymbal and song,
Much praising with censer and knee,
Such scent of sweet blood for so long,
Shall no reward follow from thee ?

We give, and our neighbour repays ;
We lend, he restores us our loan.
Are men to be fair in their ways,
And gods to deal falsely alone ?

Wilt thou snuff at the fat of our beeves,
And show us no token of good ?
Is recompense lighter than leaves ?
Is gratitude thinner than blood ?

Wilt thou listen the drone of our hymn,
And glaze thy dull orbs to a stare ?
Wilt thou bring us dark days for a whim,
And send us as handmaid despair ?

We have done thee due worship indeed.
We have sown : is no reaping to come ?
We have crawled in thy courts for our meed :
We have prayed, who had better been dumb.

We have wrestled in praise. Were it worse
To have made thee lewd mock with light words,
To have haled down thy niche with a curse,
And twisted thy feet into cords ?

Ah Lord, will one kneeler remain
If worship and cursing are one ?
If chaff be accounted as grain,
In the silence where all things are done ?

If record be lost in the tomb ?
If, after the failing of breath,
One measure, one silence, one doom,
Be borne in the strong hands of death ?

If in that dim storehouse of years,
Who shall love as a lover ? Who weep ?
By thy seed good or evil, it bears
One fruit in the fallows of sleep.

If life, and not death, O divine,
Thou wilt bring us with choiceness of days,
We will light thee great lamps at thy shrine
And burn thee huge beeves in thy praise.

A HEATHEN TO HIS IDOL

IN TIME OF WAR

AT our gates is the stranger arrayed,
And the edge of the spoiler is strong ;
If thou save not as dead we are made,
Who give thee no worship or song.

Before them the harvest is flame,
Behind them its ashes are grey.
Their lords are of terrible name,
Their arrows of resolute way.

Thou art mighty, then save. Thou art great,
Then shred me this people like sand.
Reach down thro' the darkness of fate,
Rise up with reward in thy hand.

Who knows what disdain they have done?
How they came with a blast, with a cry,
To encamp in the grove of the sun,
To drink at the waters thereby?

How they gibed as they tightened the girth,
How they scoffed as they hammered the chain !
They are clothed in an insolent mirth ;
Thou shalt wipe them away like a stain.

By his tent at the dawning always
The lute-girls assemble, and sing
This pæan of blasphemous praise
To awaken their captain and king.

Lithe maidens, the flower of the spoil,
They twitter like cranes in the cool ;
Their shoulders are softer than oil,
Their tresses are closer than wool.

They are cunning to modulate song ;
They are trained in the dance from the teat.
They whirl and are wafted along
On nimble and rhythmical feet.

They are tired with gold orbs to their hair.
Their robe edges shine with device.
Their raiment is clearer than air.
In each ear is an earring of price.

"We will make thee thy throne as the sun,
Thy seed as the infinite stars.
In glory as thou hast begun,
Shall endure the swift path of thy wars.

"Who shall faint with thy voice in his ear,
Who refrain with thy word to arise?
Thou hast shaken a realm with thy spear,
And scattered a host with thine eyes.

"They prevailed over all men but ours ;
Proud were they of face, yet are slain.
They fenced out their inland with towers,
And strengthened the rims of their main.

"By the chosen of waves in their sight,
They sought them dry places to dwell.
They burnished the gates of their might,
With iron they girded them well.

"Their turrets were crimson afar,
As blood in the way of the sun.
On the crest of their temples a star
Came burning ere day was begun.

"They scoffed in their city of light.
They laughed to their idol at ease.
'Thou hast bound away death from our sight,
Thou hast crowned us with glory and ease.

"Thou hast filled us with meat to the lips.
Our soul is thine own and secure.
Thou rulest the waves to our ships.
Thou heedest our name shall endure.'

"So cried they, but he of their trust
Was feeble to turn thee away.
Thou hast broken their root into dust,
And trodden their branch down as clay.

"He sold them their god to a snare.
And now thy war reaches to these,
Who clasp round their Dagon in prayer,
Natheless thou shalt bruise them with ease.

"The hoarfrost is keen on the fold.
The furrows are crisp in their clay.
The winds are at peace in the cold
Until the uprising be grey.

"In slumber's deep toils thou art blest ;
Thou art folded and clothed in its grace.
How firm is the strength of thy rest,
How grand the repose in thy face.

"What shadows portentous of fight,
What hurling of foes from the steep,
What fragments, O giant, of night,
Pass over thy spirit asleep !

"Dost thou draw back thy shaft to its head,
Dost thou crash to the charge in thy car,
Dost thou wade in a phalanx of dead,
Dost thou shout in the trample of war ?

"O mighty, the dawning is near.
Arise to thy glory and reap.
This people shall prove when they hear
One blast of thine onset like sheep.

"Ascend in thy raiment of might,
Their battlements melt at thy word.
Arise in thy worship and smite.
Destroy with one sweep of thy sword !"

To such strain they have chaunted their hate.
Ah, Lord, their lewd boasting reprove.
Keep ward at thy treasury gate.
Shall a weakling thy godhead remove ?

Nay, ruler and refuge, contrive,
A network of snares to their feet :
Entangle them. Save us alive.
Rain on them thy curses as sleet.

Afflict them with trouble of blood.
Consume them in violent ways.
Let pain be their portion for good.
Exchange for amazement their praise.

Let them parch with no river in sight ;
Let them march in a sun-blaze on sands ;
Let no dew-fall refresh them at night,
Let them wake, weak as sheep, in our hands ;

That their bleeding may redden our rills ;
That no dust of their foot-print remain ;
For they boasted, their god of the hills
Could vanquish our god of the plain.

THE STRANGE PARABLE *

I THINK it left me when the sun was great.
I cannot tell the very point of time
When the cure wrought and I was free of this.
What drove it from me less and least I know.
Was it some word compelling from without,
Some royal accent potent to expel
This tribe of thing ? It rent my soul, and fled,
Upon the waste wind, down the void. Who knows ?
Let me consider, I had no pain then.
Only a kind of echo-pain remained.
And yet my soul ached with the loss of this,
My old abhorrence. It had wrought its roots
And worked its fibres round my nature so,
That I was lost without the thing I loathed ;
Painless, I seemed to hanker for old pain ;
To crave a presence necessary long
Thro' custom, rather than that new unrest
Which had replaced the banished agony.

Well, it was gone at last and plucked away.
The day it went resembled other days
So much. The latest conflict with the thing
Was so like others, where I always sank

* St. Luke xi. 24.

Worsted. I thought as little it would go,
As that the sun would blacken his round orb.
I had grown feebler every day with it,
Cared, strove, and hated less, when like a clap
My soul was empty and the spirit gone.

Strangely I rose, felt myself sound and free,
But so belated ; as a man that dreams,
And knows that he is dreaming in a land
Of phantoms, and he thinks ; " My dream must break
This moment or the next. I will lie still
And only watch. All here is smoke, and dream."
So nature seemed a filmy veil of sleep,
The hills delusion, the firm fields as mist,
The cloud-cones vapour, mirage the bright woods.
The languor and the vacancy of change
Replaced the antagonistic element,
That gave a substance to my life erewhile,
And stung my native energies from sleep,
To war against this noxious demon's way
And push of still encroaching filaments.
All this indeed had found most sudden end.
The ferment as by miracle withdrew.
The tyranny was gone and left no wound.
The agony's vibration smoothed itself
To apathetic calm. And I remained
A painless naked thing without a soul.

Then I fared forth alone beneath the skies
Without a will to guide me on my way,
In automatic motion like a drift ;
Or as a feather teased by some side-breeze
Athwart the master-current of the wind.
So nerveless and chaotic was my life.

My stagnant heart was empty save of fear.
A little eddying influx strangely stirred
Of barren dread beneath my barren heart.
Oh, but indeed this thing is pitiful,
When fear, in dearth of any purpose, rules ;
When the man, wretched beyond wretchedness,
Has still the primal instinct left of fear ;

Why should he fear, poor brute? yet he fears still.
And this ignoble thing usurps the seat
Of purpose, and her vacant function fills,
And, save one dreamy fear, the man is nought.

After this fashion I fared aimless then ;
The sting that stood for purpose drove me on.
I wound along the roots of battered crags,
Arid as death ; and jumbled as a dream
Of ruin driving thro' a sick man's brain,
Who doubts and wearies on his fevered bed.
Then, as I clomb, rose yawning heights, abrupt,
Broken in flanks and ledges of great flags,
Immeasurable levels of smooth death ;
Tilted in pinnacles among the clouds,
Where the hill-raven faltered in the mist.
My mood was calmer in these solitudes,
I loathed to look upon the valley world,
Fat, with slow smoke, grey crowded homes, and squares
Of meadow, rank with juicy undermath,
And languid cropping kine dwarfed into bees ;
And the faint sprinkle of the water-wheels,
And each mill-torrent's shudder-gleam below.
Weary was I of all my fellows' ways ;
And lonely on the summits I was best.
Sometimes a peat-tarn capped the giant chain ;
A waste of ice, pale grass, and sodden sedge
And rotten fangs of rush ; whose trembling floor
Festered in moss, and darkened to decay.
Yet here I shuddered, as the star-time came,
To see the evil spirits of the fen
Trimming their lamps to lure me. And I sighed,
Knowing how fiends had marred the under vales,
To find new demons herded in the snows
Up in the eternal solitudes of God,
Therefore I wandered on, and still no peace :
And still I paced the uplands dry and drear.
And still the curse stung burning at my heart.

Then to myself I spake and spake with heed,—
The isolation and the restless feet
Of Cain are mine for always. Shall I choose
To roam for ever, with no living voice
Save mine own sighing, hear no word of love?
Love, tho' a lie on lying lips, still sweet—

To wander till God blind me and I cease.
This is the desolation of the grave.
My pain erewhile to this was almost peace.
Is my gloom shaken with one rift of morn,
Is my verge radiant with one hint of sun?
Is this a phantom or a wreath of cloud
Eyed like a death, that beckons as I move?

And I with heedful steps devised return ;
My slow blood sickened in the weary ways ;
And all the evil I had ever done
Came crowding on me in slow loathsome shapes,
Saying, behold thy deed, changed, thy deed still,
In its corruption. 'Twas a merry deed
In thine old careless season. Mark it now ;
For time is great to find things in their truth,
And this was foul beneath its shining hide
In those days even ; but the taint has spread
And bloated it and shown the world its core.
And then came others, reaching out foul hands,
Distorted from young faces I had known,
Until I fled along the barren hills
And prayed to find death with a bitter prayer :
I loathed myself too greatly to endure
The hateful and irrevocable past.

What then sustained me through ? No hand of heaven.
No death sat waiting by the granite slab,
Or in the cracks of that dread violet lake
Frozen and fast since God created snow.
The greedy chasm refused me : at my tread
The snows yelled downwards, loosened ere my feet
Had made two onward steps. The crazy shales
Withheld me by an inch of crumbling ledge
From the abysmal silence leagues below.

At last the plain, O God : the bitter heights
Are whistling long behind. This rooted flower
Comes on me like the voices of my friends.
There is my place, last of the level plain :
The mist had masked it wholly yet I know
The faintest border of the filmy wall,
And nearer, nearer drawn, my weary feet
Pause on the empty precinct of my race.

Ay me, returning. This is no return.
The core of desolation, where no rest
Shall come for ever, or one eyelid fall
In that sweet pure oblivion of the just.
Empty and swept and garnished tho' it be,
This is no home, but some sepulchral den
Set round with urn and ashes of the dead ;
Death breathes about its chambers like a blight,
The hearth is darkened with a phantom curse ;
I think no child will play there any more,
And I am lonelier here than on the void.

So went I forth, and took unto my need
Seven former comrades in the naked walls ;
They came and dwelt there, souls that mock the light,
And banter with the melancholy time,
Unheeding the to-morrow ; drowning sense
And foresight down ; contented to maintain
A grim carousal with a staring death,
And imminent destruction, in an hour
Ready to touch the cup and put away
From all pale lips for ever lust of wine.
Therefore the drift and end I do not know ;
Only this thing is certain in my soul,
That man with men must change his words or die.
And this I hold, man lonely is not man,
Dowered with the curse and need of social bond,
And leavened by his fellows into sin,
Because he cannot take his path alone.
The fretful ache of living goads him on.
Tho' he pry vainly thro' the secret doors
Of future, only gloom and cloud within
Are seen for answer ; joy before his feet
Fades, and sweet rest retires in rainbow foam ;
Perilous instincts lure him and mislead.
Tho' for a season he may conquer down
And put to flight the traitor legion well,
Yet with to-morrow's light they will return ;
And if he yield, relapsing to their rule,
Relapse is worse perdition to the man,
Than to have never left his sin at all.
Ay me, mysterious doom ; what help is mine ?

THE SIREN TO ULYSSES

MIGHTY in glory, king of patient brain,
Reef thy brown sails and gather up thy oars :
The rest is here and limit of thy way.
The gods have here decreed thee thy repose.
The slant and driving valleys of green brine
Shall never rock thee more in gusty foam.
The gathered clouds against an angry moon,
The fleecy wave-rush on the shoaling crags,
Shall be remembered as abolished things,
The laboured preludes to thy larger joy.

Here is an island that the violet waves
Ripple against, uncrested, musical :
There is no turmoil on its lustrous seas,
Nor any day in which the singing birds
Pause thro' the measure of the fadeless year.

Thou who hast oared the long world's humid floor,
My lithe arms soon shall wind thee, and my mouth
Smoothe out the stain of travel from thy brow :
Soft and serene the bosom of my rest.
Silvering groves in twilight shall be ours,
Where the moon dare not come for secrecy,
But sends the corner of a peering beam.
While the leaves rustle, lest our kisses wake
The nested thrushes, philomels of dawn.
And I will sing thee songs of sacred lore
As low as breathing : and my lucid arms
Shall move the heavy fragrance of the night,
To soothe aside the glosses of my hair
From thy deep earnest eyes, and front of care,
Large, level, wise. My lips shall seem on thine,
As cowslip petals sweet and faint within,
Divinest in the hours of the prime dews.

An hour of this, my love, shall bring thee more
Of wisdom, than a century of toil
In seeing traffic places, marts of men,
Grey citadels on headlands, arsenals,
Quays, temples, harbours, races, customs, minds ;
Then intervals of buffet with the surge,
Hearing the crags beaten with reeling sprays.

Wisdom is thine, but I can give thee more :
For thou art subtle as a man alone :
But I, that am immortal, can reveal
The things which gods have shrouded from of old,
Fearing that man should know them and be wise ;
And, scaling on from height to height, attain
Their drowsy empire in his thirsty zeal
To grasp the utter knowledge of the earth.
For man is restless, but the God at rest :
And that enormous energy of man
Implies his imperfection ; perfect they,
Exempt and firm, in no disquietude,
A consummation scorning thought beyond.

Wisdom is mine ; but I can give thee love ;
Which, twinned with wisdom, is most perfect life,
Love being crown of wisdom, unenjoyed
Save of the wise in its essential core,
An ecstasy beyond the fleeting sense ;
Which wisdom nearest godhead can attain
In glimpses only : but the herd of men
Love as the herds : the scale of higher love
Ascends with higher wisdom and the joy.

Thine oars are wrapt, thy sails are worn awry :
Thy knees are cumbered with the boring shell :
Thy sailors loathe the long perpetual path
Where sweeps the waste vibration, vale on vale.
Thou only, King, art haughty in thy soul
To overbear the adverse elements
With human purpose sterner than the wave.
Thy face is set upon thy barren rock
To reach it in despite of gods or men.
But either death shall reach thee on the road
Of the moist waters ; or this island gained
Shall seem a bitter cheat for all thy toil.
For man must ever hold some wish before,
And drape it up in cloudy attribute
Beyond perfection, lest his laggard feet
Loiter beside the highway of the world.
But when the wish is scaled he casts it by,
And feigns another landmark far away,
Till his brain darkens and his feet are still.

Therefore he wisely lives, who wisely reaps
 The dew upon the grass before the noon
 Has quenched it ; taking wisely what the days
 Lay at his feet, nor asking much beyond.
 Love may be his and wisdom in degree ;
 There is no further scope for mortal days :
 The aims of highest natures all resolve
 Themselves in these ; and these are in my hand
 To bring thee : more than others' they are thine.
 The seas are yonder crested in grey bloom,
 But here is stormless ether evermore :
 And love without one ripple on his rest,
 And toiling done away with and no tear.

THE COUNT OF SENLIS AT HIS TOILET

WHAT scrap is this, you thrust upon me now?
 Some grievance-bill ; I'm sick of seeing such.
 What can these burghers always want with me ?
 I am weary of petitions, yet they pour.
 This is a brave word, liberty, indeed ;
 And now-a-days each lean and mongrel whelp
 Littered about these streets chimes in his voice
 For liberty. I loathe the letters' sound.
 How dare you bring this in at tiring time,
 Fretting my soul ? This chain is dull as brass,
 Lean down, you caitiff, lacquer up the gold ;
 Rub for your life, rub. There's another stone
 Flawed in the centre droplet, where it shows,
 Cracked like a nut ; why, man, it was a gem,
 An amethyst as clear as a girl's eye.
 And you must crash my chain about like sacks
 Of Kathern pears ; there are no servants, none,
 As I remember service, in these days ;
 A new time pestilent ; each clown must ride,
 And nobles trudge behind him in the dirt—
 Lay out my murrey-coloured velvet suit ;
 How you detain me fumbling ; knave and fool,
 Don't ruffle back the pile of Genoa's looms
 With your rank sweating fingers the wrong way.
 Do you suppose I wear a wild cat's fur
 For your amusement ? You must play these tricks,
 With only half-an-hour to banquet time ;
 And when I rail, stand helpless, gibbering there,

As it a nobleman could tire himself
 Like a field scare-crow against time and grain,
 You'd have me round my shoulders toss a sack,
 And give my hair one shake, and make an end,
 And so stride in among the grey-green eyes,
 And dainty hands, and little perfumed arms,
 And white smooth laughing kittens at their play ;
 Dear hearts, I think they call it love-making,
 A purr begins it and a scratching ends,
 Or each succeeds alternate ; bless them all :
 You, with these darlings waiting, prove a snail,
 Your careless hands would send me to the feast
 Much as a diver from the castle moat,
 Slimed in disorder. You've the mind, it seems,
 And leisure to disgrace me. Try, my knave.
 You that are born upon my liberties,
 And I've the right of gibbet on my lands,
 At least my fathers had it ; that's the same ;
 If time is able to filch lawful rights
 Away from any man without his leave,
 Then let time void the ducats from my pouch,
 When I refuse to spend them. Have then heed ;
 And now this gentle rabble, that I own,
 Have bribed you here, my thrall, to bring me in
 A string of rank seditions on a rag
 Of calfskin, at the very time and hour,
 You know, it chiefly sets me out of gear
 To find thus rudely thrust beneath my nose
 The wrongs of carrion butchers, the sweet sighs
 Of carters, longing after equal laws.
 To push these in, of all the hours of the day,
 To vex me here half-dressed, is shameless deed.
 Consider only, certain moments hence
 The banquet summons finds me, pest of heaven !
 With my mind ruffled, half my clothes awry ;
 I'm sent among the damsels at the board,
 With a sour taste of serfdom in my mouth ;
 I am put from my whole amenity ;
 My pleasing power and courteous manner lost ;
 For such light sunny ways will not beam out,
 Unless I can forget, ignore, abolish,
 The sweating boors penned in their styes below.

Man, man, is this a time for wrong and right ?
 The doublet bulges, the ruff hangs awry,
 Limp as the wool of some damp wether's fleece.

The feast is ready—they are going down,—
 I hear Count Edmund, coxcomb, on the stairs—
 You loiter, varlet, and I'm late ; your deed ;
 You thrust your charters when I ought to dress ;
 Charters indeed. I, that have known it long,
 Have never seen this precious burgh of mine
 Save on the eve of starving thro' my dues,
 At least their song has run so all these years.
 And yet they are fed enough to roar out loud,
 "Behold, we starve !"—My ruffles ; that's the left,
 You idiot—And they breed too, breed like rats ;
 So much the better for my toll per head.
 They will not starve ; I'd like to see it done.
 They can cheat hunger in a hundred ways ;
 They rob my saw-pits clean of bran for bread ;
 There never were such greedy knaves as these.
 They clear my outer court of nettles next ;
 They boil them, so I'm told, I hope they sting.
 Well, I shall not complain, it saves the scythe,
 And we great lords must wink and let ourselves
 Be pilfered by the small fry halter-ripe.
 It is the doom and meed of noble blood,
 To be a prey to clowns ; and God, He knows,
 I am not one of those who grudge the poor.
 And so my kindness fills them full of corn,
 And rains this plague down in petitions thus.
 I am soft-hearted, they presume on this—
 And I will singe clean out your fishy eyes
 With white-hot tongs, unless you make that cloak
 Fall smoother on the carriage of my sword.
 Why, you lean hound, whom mange will soon destroy,
 And save your hanging, where's the scabbard brace ?
 See, you have made it stick right out behind,
 Like Satan's sister's broom-stick. And the cooks
 Are at it dishing up. You fumble there,
 As if the precious minutes stood like sheep,
 And you'd the day to lie upon the grass
 And count the crows. There, that goes better—Come,
 I'll glance on this petition—What is here ?
 "That our starvation is no idle tale,
 Of his own seeing our liege lord must know ;
 Since his own noble and peculiar pack,
 In tufted sedges at the mort o' th' deer,
 Lately unearthed a lean white woman dead—
 Confound the knaves ; and granting this were so,
 This is a delicate and savoury thing

Just before dinner to remind me of.
This shall spoil all I meant to do for them ;
How dare they? Why this same wan rigid face,
Must thrust itself upon my grounds and die,
And sicken several pretty damsels found,
And spoil the hunting of a score of lords ;
And damp the show. No wonder ; I myself
Felt rather squeamish half a dial's turn,
And found strong waters needful to reset
The impassive mettle of high breeding's ways.
And then my Kate, who'll laugh a lawyer dumb,
Was all that evening dull as a town clock ;
And later on—here catch this trash—a word
More and I clap a double impost on,
And make them starve in earnest. Tell them so,
Sir thief, my varlet, their ambassador—
Enough of this, why drivell we on these?
Get, for Saint Job's sake, forward with my beard.
You push this trivial business in my jowl,
And make me dawdle over urgent cares,
And tice me to peruse, while your rough hands
Will turn me out a Scythian for the feast,
In barbarous disorder. Is that all?
My ring and gloves ;—Count Edmund, there he goes ;
How that fool brags about his pedigree.
His veins must run pure ichor, ours mere blood.
I'd gladly try my rapier on his ribs,
And bleed him much as any plough-boy bleeds.
How can a man speak any such vain words?—
I hear him swinging down the corridor,
With all his plumage and bedizened hide
As clean as a cobsman's—trust him for that—
He has no thought above his skin and gloves,
Or at what angle his trim beard should grow :
Despatch, thou slave ; complete me, or indeed
He'll be before me with the duchess yet.

IN ARCADIA

LOVE of the rosy neck and restless hair,
Theme of my song and queen of my despair ;
The vales are breezeless and the ring-dove's voice
Sweetens or ebbs her patient aching noise.

See how the morning's footfall, steamed in blue,
Melts from the unveiled flowers a cloudy dew.
Beyond, are seas of leaves and branching plain,
And burning islands on a rippled main.

Thy shepherd in the shadow of the hills,
In places crisp with bloom, near drip of rills,
I teach the forest-lawns my trembling notes,
While at some wide-mouthed orchis the bee floats ;
I modulate the brooding of my loves,
Till ripe noon silences the languid doves.
The petals of the rose are widest here,
The hyacinths are heavy everywhere.
The purple vetch rings over the dead pine
With arms as tender as the eglantine.
Learn thou of her, for tho' she cling and climb,
Her loving comes too late in narrow time.
She has a little dew for tears to weep—
We love a little here, and fall asleep
In earth ; are fresh woods mingled with our dreams?
The reedy music of Lethæan streams
Drives by the dreaming ear, and will not cease.
The dead are past our grieving ; not for these
The tamarisk thickets waver ; no light hours
Teach the branch music ; nor red fountain flowers
Shall hear the wave pulse out ambrosial sleep,
Or lean them toward the silver drifting deep.

Love is too brief in prime to be denied.
His fruit scarce ripens ere its bloom is dried.
His seasons surely they are full of change,
His rose cheeks wither, his light hand is strange.
His dove voice falters into heavy tones,
His warm lips alter into perished ones.
Ripe at thy hand love's glowing fruitage see ;
Gather, ere some rough wind may blast his tree.

Why wilt thou vex me with thy stranger eyes ?
The martins twitter round the silver skies,
Go gleaming all about the lands, and rest
Each by her mate-bird in love's narrow nest.
Come to my soft love precinct and sweet home,
Near where the wood-bee hoards her amber comb.
There deep woods swoon with solitude divine ;
I wait thee there arm-deep in flowery twine.

There gleam flushed poppies in among grey tares ;
Grape-clusters mellow near, and tumbled pears
Are brown in orchard grass. The fern-owl calls
At eve across the cloven river-falls,
Whose flood leaves here an island, there a swan ;
Her crystal down slant sun-rays redden on.
Come, ere the full green fails in mountain ways,
Come, ere one sterile branch of autumn sways.
Come, ere one crisp leaf ambers in the field ;
Before that coronal my hand concealed
Trembling beneath the lintel of thy bower,
Hath pinned one rose or shed one violet flower.
Descend, my dear one, golden are the groves,
Where, under umbrage of delicious coves,
The dusky cygnets sail by sires of snow,
And moor-hens paddle where the tide is slow.
And sedge-hair brushes the rosed filbert's cheek ;
And bunch and reed are mirrored in the creek,
And tremble in the under-gliding wave.
The kid comes butting where broad flag-leaves lave
And drip into the dimpling water-swell ;
He, blinking thro' the grasses, seems to dwell
In leaning thirst with eager nostrils wide,
And sailing fishes watch him, golden-eyed.

I waste my pipings ; ah, vain love-tune cease ;
The rocks reply ; she is more hard than these.
Tho' Love lie slain she will not raise his head ;
Tho' he come starving will not reach him bread ;
She is untender, ruthless, will not weep,
Her mouth is colder than the lips of sleep.
Tho' there is song of love in every nest,
She will not hearken, lest he spoil her rest,
And kiss her hard bright eyes to gentle tears,
And bind her breast with flower of stranger fears ;
She will not hearken, tho' the sky-lark goes
Away in heaven, and, steeped in golden glows,
Sings, "Let us love." Love is the linnet's tale.
The doves change music with the nightingale.
The thrush re-murmurs, emulous of song ;
One love-need tingles the sweet land along.

She hath no need of any loving ways.
To her Love's gold is dross, and dust his praise.
She is silent, as a cloud whose freight is snow ;
Robed in a frigid glory is her brow.

Her white limbs gleam along the tangled pass,
 Her bright feet nestle in the mountain grass.
 Her lips are cruel with disdain, and wise
 In scorning ; very noble are her eyes.
 She has filled indeed my heart, as some first dove
 Possesses with one song the early grove.

O fair one, is it wisdom to refuse ;
 To make Love laughter, scorn his gracious dues ?
 Ay me ; time hastens, in whose hand are set
 Sourness for savour, and for song regret,
 For rose lips wrinkles, for caresses tears.
 There is no sheaf in all his barren years,
 But greyness and salt waste of broken sands
 Whence none return with fruit between their hands,
 And where all lips are black with water-need,
 And all sweet maidens wither ; stubs of reed
 Whistle in mire, and all things else are dead.
 Then, seeing youth is brief and age is dread,
 Relent, and whisper, " Love, my scorn is gone.
 I am changed, and sigh after Love's touch and tone.
 I am broken for his voice, who did not heed.
 I am slain with needing love, who did not need ;
 Save me, whom thou hast vainly called to save,
 Lest I go maiden to the barren grave."
 Shall I not answer, dove, who have loved thee long,
 " Thy prayer is sweeter than a banquet song ;
 New tender captive in the honey lands,
 I will bind down with kisses thy fair hands,
 And have no ruth to lead thee garland-bound,
 Thro' great woods heavy with their summer sound.
 Till in an oak-glade lovelier than the rest,
 A temple rises columned to the west.
 Sacred it is to a baby god and blind,
 There, O my sweet, our haven let us find."

ODE TO PAN

THE dædal and delightful earth,
 Who may declare the secret of her birth ?

In wonder and the mist of days,
 Between grey heaven and glancing main,
 The ancient powers in mystic ways,
 They bound her with a giant chain.

So that she always might remain
Term to the wasted stars, eye to the risen rays.
They set around her, as a raiment, sea,
And vested her about with shining cloud,
That softened all its domes continually,
As to a music when the wind grew loud.
They ringed the giant mountains firm as death ;
Flake after flake upon them came the snows,
Till spring was warming underneath
Their hoarded silence into vernal glows.
How then it snapt like a chain from its sleeping,
Fountain on fountain, with sound thro' the hills
Trembling, exuberant, gleaming and leaping,
Wrestle and trouble of down-going rills.
The shivering forests hearkened, and they cried
To the warm vernal waters in delight.
" Our tendril roots are cold, our branches dried,
Sweetest child of the hill, give us wave warm as light ;
Lap and bathe, drench us thro' down our dry torrent seams
With coiling enormous sweet limitless streams."

Let the great light be on us like music from thy lips ;
Light and water flooding down with sound ;
Smite the grey frozen branches, until their perished tips
Rush out in crumpled leaflets at a bound.
Let the white resinous ends throb with the bud within,
So shall the wood lead out, with a song and a musical din,
The tender green of its arches, light as a vapour thin.

So grandly then the forest music runs,
As the great world goes on and takes no fear,
Guarded of giant stars and planet suns,
Into her burning daylight of the year.
Surely to her this winter is death-night
Of nature, and the summer this earth's day.
How should she pausing love the seasons' flight
Until the flower is pleasant in her way ?

Lonely of man stood nature at her prime ;
About her woods there was no human tone,
The melody of birds at morning time
Praising the gods alone.
Then on the bosom of the earth arose
Man, god's ploughman of the soil ;
They gave him brain to understand his woes,
And made his palms strong for perpetual toil,

But taught him theirs were stronger than his own ;
Tho' he lift hands and moan,
They were his lords ; and lords must ever be
Almighty, tho' they needed his bent knee,
The incense of his wonder given in tears ;
How should omnipotence or ageless years
Avail the mighty, with none weaker nigh
To feel amazement at their deity ?
With only brother gods as strong and great
To watch and marvel none, how should a god
create ?

And yet these men they planted there to raise
Up to a cold perfection out of reach
The tribute hymn in season to their praise
With rich blood often of slain tender beast ;
These men grew mutinous whom they would teach,
And questioned with themselves, "The great are
least

And these our lords our henchmen ; in that they
Rule not themselves, are frail in earthly way,
Hate to do justice, drowse at lustful feast ;
Are these the rulers that we can obey ?"
Then in a laughter turned themselves away,
And crowned their reason for a god and great,
Which all celestials chiefly loathe and hate.
Therefore mysterious omen, floating flame,
And nightly portent ringed with starry fire,
Dismayed the roaming, tribeless, kingless race,
Who builded god in thought to their desire.
Until the golden-locked one, Themis, came
And taught them ritual, justice, mercy, grace,
And many an old forgotten phrase
Of orphic hymn, age-altered yet the same ;
And choral flutings and well-kneaded cakes
To Pan the bud-expander ; who awakes
Nature, and is a god in nature's core
Seated, and one with nature evermore.
Pan is no cloudy ruler in dim haze,
No king of air-belts delicate afar,
But in the ripening slips and tangled ways
Of the blue cork-woods where the goat-herds are.
And we may find him by the bulrush pits,
Where the hot oxen chin-deep soaking lie ;
Or in the mulberry orchard grass he sits
With milky kex and marrowy hemlocks nigh ;
Where silken floating under-darnels tie

And mat the herbage of the summer-floor.
A god he is, this Pan, content to dwell
Among us, nor disdains the damp and hot wood-smell.
He is a god and more.

He loves the flaky boles of peeling pines
Brown as the sand ; he loves the languid vines,
As the fruit darkens in their drooping leaves ;
The crumpled poppies garnered among sheaves
Softens his eyes with colour as of dreams.
The first few crisping leaf-falls on his ear
Herald the wasting year.
He feels the ivies push their stem-feet up
Against the beech-bole all in seams between,
And broaden downwards many a rounded cup
In orb'd tops of mealy buds white-green.
Pan too will watch in open glare unseen
The quiet locust seething in the blaze
Upon the vine-leaves of the quarry ways.

By broken margins seated of the main
The dog-troop's sour sharp yelping he will hear,
As they go flushing up gull, heron, crane,
And noisy at some stranded carcase tear.
Pan sees some maiden bloom with shining hair
Descending slowly from a temple porch,
Her sandals come in flashes like a torch,
Bound on some service to the image there ;
Leaning she holds the myrtle bushes near,
And rinses from the lowest marble stair
Her sacrificial urn in currents clear.
Ay, and this Pan will watch the tillage yield,
The mastich coppice and the millet field.
The brown rough-bearded bondsman sits thereby
To hasten with long goad and urgent cry
The oxen treading barley round and round.
He scoops with eager finger for his meat
A pulpy-headed gourd, and to the ground
Tosses the rind, and watchful from his seat
Cries to his oxen lest they slacken pace.
These sights doth Pan consider, and all ways
Of human toil, all doings, all desire ;
Whereby the new gods bend men to obey,
And give them hands of lead and brains of fire ;
And crush them with the heel of iron sway,
And weaken them with labour, lest they rise,
In Titan fashion proud against the skies.

AN EXPOSTULATION

O WEAKLING nation, brood of foolish hearts,
 Sons of dismay, children of rebel seed,
 Ye that sin meanly in a joyless sin,
 Ye that seek after death without reward,
 And go and hire yourselves to follow him,
 Reaping your own destruction for ill wage—
 The strong God, merciful in all his power,
 Cries to this people thro' my feeble lips.

Shall my soul always wrestle with your sins?
 Are ye so mighty to despise my voice?
 What are ye then? A little crumbled dust
 Between my hands, an ash-cake in my palms.
 Array me then your power, that I may smite;
 So mean ye are I will not lift an arm,
 Yea, with the breathing of a little breath,
 I will blot out your record from the earth;
 Shall the grain strive against the reaper's edge,
 Shall the sheep bind the shepherd, shall the smoke
 Throw down the altar? Ah, my people, hear.
 Shall some dim vapour of a shaken wind
 Lift up herself in scorn against my seat?
 Shall rain-drops say, come let us beat his throne?
 When the great sea, strong as my light is strong,
 Mother of many a shining river-head,
 The great white water-garland of the world,
 Is shaken if I call across her deeps.
 She would remove beyond the day-spring gate
 In trembling undulation at my voice.
 She shakes this ocean I have made so strong,
 Is this then righteous, that ye know no fear?

Flee, crouch behind your gates; creep under caves,
 Escape, depart, be hidden, get you far;
 Lest I bend down my bow, and the dart leap
 Hissing upon you brutish to obey,
 Till ye be tamed with burning sores of death.

Ah, chosen people, once by strength and joy,
 Have I not pleaded with your swerving feet?
 I do not love, ye vain ones, that ye die.
 Your foolish blood is bitter in mine eyes.

Yet am I weary crying all day long,
What if I make an end and call no more,
And let the red grave reap you suddenly?
Ye have not seen me in my battle might;
No supplication longer will restore
That mild god, your old refuge and supreme
Munition; when ye hold my easy laws,
Your path is pleasant underneath my hand,
Your soul is fed with dew. The old grey earth
Sleeps in content, hearing my spirit call,
"Be thou renewed." To her my care is sweet,
And my word works upon her; as some dawn,
When the strong seed of light outspreads its stem
And leafage in among heaven's darkened floor;
Till there be no room vacant from the pure
Prevailing beams that touch the cloud to flower.
Ay, in such might my word hath wrought alone;
A little spoken word, a thrust-out hand,
The moving of an eyelid can prevail
Beyond the violent deep or burning cloud.
Nay more, my thought is greater than your deed,
My silent purpose than your wrestling arms.
What if I will it, tho' my lips be mute,
The raining of my favour winnows down
The soft air radiant. Feather-light it falls,
Balm to the broken, to the wounded sleep,
To parched lips honey, to the hungry bread.
In all sweet ways upon the sorest hearts;
Mighty indeed to heal being mine. The grain
Beaten about the field of many winds
Straightens again. From refuge creep the ewes
Bleating amid the vapour of the crags:
The doves begin a little in the rocks:
The vinedressers crawl out against the hills.
Why should ye disobey me any more?
Ye are in no wise great to purchase death.
The kings of men indeed—such are ye none—
Great of estate, in treasure-towers display
Excelling tissues, silk, and purple spoil,
Gold, spices, precious vessels, cedar, gums.
They can command desire with such a store,
And purchase costly evil to their wills.
They barter to lean death insatiable
Their fat souls at some profit. Sin rewards
Their service duly for a waning day.
He sits and pipes them back lascivious tunes

To mock the senses with a dream of heaven.
The unfailing fountains of their garden leap,
When drought has blackened half the village mouths,
The spice-air thickens in their orange-boughs ;
And heavy scent of orchard terraces
Comes as the wind comes, with a swing of leaves.
It is a region sweet in air and sound ;
But, out beyond the cincture of his lawns,
And brazen portals firm as mountain face,
The pestilence is heavy on the land,
And the dead thicken in the silent streets.
And round the failing wells the dying crawl ;
And a strange haze, like lost low scraps of cloud,
Sickens their edges into poisoned hues,
And they float thick with swollen bandaged things.
And men who pass shudder and will taste none,
And no man reckons if he live the day.
But in his garden lolls the bloated king,
And laughs a languid laugh to see the slave
Curl her lithe limbs down fleecy coverlets,
And finger at the stringing of her lute,
Waiting upon his eye-lash, to command
Her lovely tones to tremble ; as she sets
Her sweet breath into song to make him joy.
How he is lord of earth and love besides ;
Absolute god ; to whom her nature flows
In adoration ; as some puny stream
Born in far hills throbs towards the amber gates,
Where sun and ocean mingle crowned in fire.
He is delighted in his days, for these
Few shadows of deliciousness ill-bought,
Some lying praises of a lute-girl's lay,
Some falser laughter, a brief purple state,
Fulness of bread, and plenitude of ease ;
And like a smoke he is done with, and put down.
He shall not cry loud in the grave, or moan
For that sweet pleasaunce where he feasted well.
But I will lay no hand to heave him out.
But thou art even vainer than this fool ;
Seeing that while he lived he took rare wine
In a large cup and yellow, with sweet lees ;
Time came a little season for his slave
To cram his senses full of spice, and meat,
And music till he tumbled in his grave.
But thou wilt serve on death without a wage,
Since bitter is the best of thy day's fruit.

Thou art not mighty. Thou art storeless, cold,
Unroyal, hungry. Earth to thee is lean
And pastureless. How should'st thou not obey
My easier precept? Wilt thou leave so much,
To make thee serve me in a dainty heed?
But my reward is great in after-fruit,
And my delight is lovely as sweet rain;
My chosen never shall be trampled down;
I will reveal them hidden water-heads,
Fountains of moisture quiet in sweet grass,
And reeds that sound at season with the quail.
Cry out upon my glory and have rest;
Crowd to my shadow, and feed full with ease.
Cry, oh, my children, and my shine shall break
Flower-wise from heaven. Am I, the great one, waned
To this exceeding weakness? Is my hand
Feeble to save, since ye refuse to call?
Can I not bring again the sweet old years?
I will restore the broken, and set straight
The failing knees. I will bring back your rest,
Ye bruised and forgotten ones of sin.
Ye shall emerge from hill-dens cavernous
Whereby ye made your harbour with the wolves,
Your bread wild berries, bitter herb your oil.
Ye shall have housing warm and store of beeves,
And comfortable prospect at your doors.
I will command the locust that he spare,
I will refrain the canker lest he spoil.
I will make heavy in its husk the ear,
So that it bend the straw-stalk under it.
Against the light cloud I will stand and say,
Render thy moisture, satisfy the land;
So that my people dwell fulfilled with ease.
I will reward them, if they will obey;
But if, with stubborn faces, they return
To surfeit on the savour of old sins;
Lo, I predict of these fair things not one,
But for all feasting-houses emptiness,
Ash for choice raiment, wail for viol song,
Wormwood for wine, for all fine silver scum,
Darkness and wrath and burning and dismay.

PHILOCTETES

A METRICAL DRAMA

PHILOCTETES

GREATLY thou broodest on the sacred wave,
 Ray of the amber god. The old sere earth
 Opens her eyes and wakens. O thou flame,
 Elder than Zeus, thou art to other men
 As a god leading them to their desire,
 And happy works about the ancient fields ;
 And gentle things they love are at their side
 Brightening to wake them, and not any tear
 Is in their halls : but golden as a dream
 The fair day flows to even, and the night
 Wraps many blessings round her. So the gods
 Consent to leave the man a little while,
 And overlook their vengeance. Do they so?
 Ay, give him bride and children with meek eyes,
 And lovely ways and little tender lips,
 In his own image. And the man desires
 Nothing ; the earth is good, he says, and fair,
 The flower of time, sweet love. Ay me, but I,
 So utterly broken, dare I wander in dream
 By their beatitude? The tainted thing,
 Scorn of all heroes, leper of the host,
 With human loving what have I to do?
 Pain and my loathsome curse are truly mine.
 God's wisdom—so they call it—gives me these
 And keeps their native venom fresh and green.
 I tell thee, Zeus, and thy new brood with thee,
 Blind rulers, that dishonoured as I am,
 I most would scorn, whom all men scorn, a man
 To be malignant as ye gods can be.
 For time had healed my evil long ago
 But ye withheld its healing. Nature loves
 And will not leave in pain her children long :
 No poison may endure her affluent year,
 Filling the brain with the light health of fields.
 So did the ancient gods ; but thou, O Zeus,
 Bringest a bitter mist on the sweet day :
 Thou settest night with all her orbs to watch
 The pulses of my torment's tidal pain.

Thou hast bound my brow with fire, and nerve by nerve
Hast drawn the long fierce poison like a thread,
For years unwasting, ample to destroy.
And yet thou never gavest me to end
My life beneath thine anger. Is it much
To pray to be as nothing since my breath
So utterly offends thee : gentle and mild,
I covet death the assuager, but thou sayest
"His finger shall not heal thee." O sick heart,
And very painful limbs, and feeble soul,
Is it worth while for this great lord above
To vex you thus? What pastime can it be
If giants ruin ant-hills? Strong art thou,
Jealous and most resentful ; the calm years
Flow, and thy vengeance livelier burns always.
But I a man would pity on my spear
To keep a foeman writhing, tho' he had made
My home a silence, and had given my son
To the grey earth a soulless shadow of sleep.
But towards the gods man's evil has little way,
His good a wing full feeble, both are vain :
Therefore I ask, how sinning have I made
The immortal brow uneasy under its crown
Of domination? Is mere man's offence
To live beyond the offender? For he goes
Under his barrow in a little time,
And all his brain that held the thought is dust ;
Doth the third race born from him know his name?
Shall then his wrong perplex the enduring gods?

CHORUS

O thou in ancient days,
The peer of heroes, on whose brow a boy
Glory had breathed with her fair lips, and gave
The archer string ; O comrade of the great
Athlete, whose soul from Ceta in angry fume
Scaled an unwilling heaven, and sits alway
Beside the purple tables and the cloud,
Allowed an equal godhead, one more throne—
Thou, Philoctetes,
Unwilling colonist
Of rugged Lemnos, mother-land of mine ;
She cannot feed the multitudinous
Flocks of the loamy mainland, poor indeed
And yet my country ; whom the hoary deep

Sustains with scaly herds, whom pasture none
 Delights, but the wave palaces
 Of ocean weedy-thresholded—
 Fallen art thou, my hero, such a plague
 Hath Zeus devised.
 And all men left thee when they saw his hand
 Was heavy to destroy.
 They cast thee from the glory of their war
 A tainted thing. They made
 No share of battle with thee. So their oars
 Ceased at this Lemnos for a little while
 And left thee the chance guest
 Of a poor nation feeding on the sea.
 And yet we reverence thee, O archer king,
 Disrooted strangely now from glory's earth,
 Because thou grewest once
 Comely, and broad, and fair.
 We have fed full on days,
 And know in life a most unstable hour.
 Man standeth for a little and he falls ;
 Therefore we give his pride
 No knee or praising hands,
 But if our aid in pain can solace thee
 'Tis thine, afflicted king.

PHILOCTETES—PHIMACHUS

PHIMACHUS

I come with dawn as is my wont to come,
 And I have brought thee herbs of healing ways
 To lull thy wound, my hero, as is meet
 And use with me these many years, and yet
 Still earlier than my coming I have heard
 The low voice of thy moaning all these years.
 And still the god afflicts thee eminent
 Of sorrows ; and the full black cloud recedes
 No fold of thunder, ripe to the very lips
 With venom on thy life. The still year goes
 About us, and the vivid buds begin
 In the rock niches, and the soft time flows
 Full of all triumph blossomy ; there is change
 When autumn sheaves all nature up in death.
 Change in thine anguish none ; for as this sea
 Relaxes not her turmoil, though the rocks
 Are full of summer, so thy pain endures

The change of seasons stabler aye than they.
But we accept these gods that round the year,
And eat our bread and crush a little wine,
And thank them ; even if we breathe we lift
The hand of praise, for the worst living thing
In life, pain only, even as pain, is more
Than Orcus and the soulless fluttering shades.
Praise thou the gods for this mere power to praise.

PHILOCTETES

You'd have me thank Zeus with this pain upon
My brain, because he will not stamp me out,
Like my old master Heracles, into
The vapours of the pyre ! Not so, to him
The savour of my pain is sweet. No worm
Writhes upon earth but he takes pastime in it ;
And his god-children learn the trick of him
And ply their lesser vengeance. But he
The master-serpent keeps the subtlest poison
And claims to use it as a king alone.
The under-thrones of heaven may glut their ilps
On their more watery vintages of harm.
He may destroy, he only, with the full
Ripe relish of a creature's agony,
All-mighty and all-cruel. For he sits
In the old mild gods' seat, has done away
The kind grey dotard Saturn, snapt like wool
His father's light and golden sceptre-shaft,
As useless as the brittle columned stalk
Of a dried wood-kex. Sons ye were, and next
His love and near his glory ; but ye held
Council with anger and an evil lust
Of thronedom, saying, " Saturn shall not rule,
He could not hate, a sorry god indeed ;
Would slough his state off and sit down with men
And chatter like a brother, and have heed
Of crop and season, the old idiot god ;
And see the trees grow and have joy in them
And healthy herds at pasture, and the bees
Out at their labour happy. But we crept
Upon him, for he trusted us his sons,
But we with hate hated, eternally
Had hated his beneficence, and hate
Had strengthened us to watch with smiling faces,
While the deep vengeance griped us keen below ;

Ages we watched, the ripe hour came, and then
 We strangled him at cup-time with low laughs
 And set his grey face underneath our heels.
 And stamp't him out immortal as he was
 Into an inane ghost and emptiness
 Hard on annihilation ; for our natures
 Had thriven on hatreds to a strength beyond
 His easier essence ; and he had given away
 One half his primal virtue in sheer acts
 Of large creative kindness. And, O then,
 We laughed and cried, Love men now to thy core,
 In that thou art a spectre weak as sleep
 Under the gloom. But surely now is shed
 Upon our brows dominion, eminence
 Of empire. Lo, the thunder, a tame hound,
 Is resting at our footstool. Chiefly we
 Can lust and hate, and therefore are we lords."

PHIMACHUS

Hero, this anger-fuel to thy pain
 Is doubled anguish. Is it wise to shed
 Oil on the flame without it fierce enough ?
 Ay, and these gods may hear thee, and their king
 Loves not man's question how he came by rule.

PHILOCTETES

I have outpast the limit of all fear,
 I am too wretched for his deaths to care
 The feeding on me. Fear him, happier souls ;
 Shall he regard the murmur of such a thing
 As Philoctetes, shall he fear my lips ?
 Zeus sits in far too firm a chair to dread
 The ripples of our protest, weak as foam ;
 And our rebuke is like a summer wind
 Touching his stern lip-corners and no more ;
 Or crisping perhaps, as thistle-down, one lock
 Aside of the square high forehead arrogant.
 Nay, rather stifle in behind thy teeth
 The moaning of thy torment, crush together
 Thy corded lips when it swells up thro' thee ;
 He will not see the tremulous lids so far—
 Be pale—so pale—but move not, nay, nor curse.
 'Twill vex him if his grinding scourges seem
 To have dulled in over-use their ancient edge ;

If this thy plague doth call him father, who sits
Watching his vengeance ripen like a flower,
Between his cloudy cushions where he leans
Calm o'er the grey-green troubled earth below,
With many sweet oppressions in his eye,
Anarch and upstart, and misruler Zeus.

PHIMACHUS

Be wise and be not angry, for he hears ;
Ay, far away he hears it, in the thin
Essential azures mist-less. Ay, and calls,
Who knows ? if angered, to loose on to thee
A subtler demon. Who art thou to gauge
The arm-reach of his evil ? Canst thou sound
The treasures of his poison ? For these gods
Lengthen at will their fathom-line of craft
And all contrivance, never striking ground.

PHILOCTETES

Ay me, the soulless herds graze on and fear
No scathe ; they do not count the days in care.
That core of evil, knowing ill shall be,
Is not assigned them. And the baby feeds,
Milks at the breasts and smiles, and owneth not
Allegiance yet to knowledge that shall make
The fair earth bitter to his wiser eyes.
Give us the old gods back ; this hard new king,
Why doth he reign in that he reigns so ill ?

CHORUS

Beautiful might
Of the earth-born children,
Brood of the Titans,
Ah, utterly fallen !
Ye were too noble to sit still
Beneath oppression ; other spirits
Gave Zeus his way. They said,
"Go to, he wields the thong of masterdom,
Exceedingly revengeful ; and his plagues
Bite to the marrow of his foes.
Under his feet is laid
Dominion, will ye then
Resist him ? Nay, not we."

But ye had other song,
Ye Titans feasting with the lion-nerve,
Pressing your lips in as the new young god
Played with his thunder, as a raw boy tries
His newly-handled sword
Upon the bark of trees.
Ye saw him, ye grim brood,
Scored with a many years, ere he had drawn
His baby milk ; ye saw him, and ye smiled,
In that he called, " Begone, ye old monsters, time
Has done with you. Did Saturn stand before
My bathing rays of glory?
One finger of my strength
Wipes you away like drops of dew."
Then with a whisper ye rose up,
Ye spake no word of council,
Ye came one-minded,
Still and very terrible.
Ye piled the mountains
To scale the cloud-line.
Heaven saw ye come, and all
Her cloud munitions trembled.
Then howling fled
Zeus and his tyrant-brood,
Shrill-voiced as girls,
And sheltered them awhile
In bestial forms.
Awhile, but ye were easy in the flush
Of conquest, unrevengeful, when ye might
Have crushed them out,
Mild were ye and forgave
Their extirpation utterly.
So these drew breath and guile
Reseated them : O Titan sons of earth,
O mild great brethren, when the coiling beast
Resumed the terrors of his battered crest,
There was no mercy for you.
Mercy ! nay, but horrible
Rapture of vengeance;
How they settled to it,
And all their eyes
Swam with the luxury of the feast.
Ye have seen a pack
Of wild dogs pulling
Against each other,
At some sick beast they have conquered ;

And all their teeth
Are clogged with their tearings,
And they snarl at each other
Half-blinded with blood-spurts.
Ay me, my Titans—
Why have ye fallen?
Nobler than these which thrust you under night.
For ye were calm and great,
And when ye heard
The cry of earth your mother, whom these gods
Continually afflicted,
Ye flung yourselves on the new power, and just
Were stifling out the creature at its neck,
When it edged slily
Its secret teeth out,
And stung you down to darkness.

Beautiful might
Of the earth-born children,
Brood of the Titans,
Ah, utterly fallen.

PHILOCTETES

Ay, fallen are ye, my Titans, this new god
Cements his throne firm down with creatures' wrong :
Pain is the sceptre ruling him his earth.
Why have I pain? My master why had he?
The great and best bare chiefly as he bore.
He had vexed the gods with looking heaven in face
And saying, "Do I owe thee anything
Save my discomfort?" And ye know the tale
Bitter and stale, yet never stale its fear ;
How not the hated one alone can feed
Their vengeance, crush'd and done with from the earth ;
Why a mere man thus rights himself. The fiends
Are wiser, gracious wisdom : they contrive
A winding and hereditary curse
To keep the ancestral blood-taint live and warm.
And so the seeds of torture creep between
The veins of the innocent children, whose meek eyes
Had never known the sweet air, when the sire
Roused the high gods. Subtle ye are and wise
In vengeance, surely gods and good and great.
So I the attendant of this Heracles

Did him some feeble comfort at his end,
And this was treason to their vengeful hands.
More, I beheld how his worst agonies
Were nobler than the soft and sumptuous hours,
When the Olympians sate themselves to the core
On splendid passion, draining radiant-eyed
In their cloud-precincts all deliciousness.
Which thing to have thought is death : but death is mild.
Therefore they gave me torment nine-year long.
For I will tell how it was with Heracles ;
For when he drew the accursed garment on
And felt the poison eat his flesh to the bone,
Nor could he tear it from him, baleful web,—
He knew the mighty horror of his doom
Inevitable, clothing him throughout
With creeping flame intensest. And he said,
“ My death is on me, comrade, in thy love
I charge thee nowise leave me till the end.
'Twill be a full brief service, for I climb
This Cæta, there I sacrifice and die.
And so we clomb together. All day long
We toiled up Cæta and the evening fell
One red great ball of sun ; and flared and split
The radiance : and he ever moaning clomb,
Moaning and shuddering, and huge agonies
Of sweat were on the muscles of his limbs,
And in his eyes a terrible dumb pain.
And now he clomb, and now in torment sat
With set teeth on some boulder, swaying slow
His head and rugged beard ; and all his breast
Lay heaving and the volumes of its breath
Went up in dry hot vapour. Or he sat
Staring as in amazement. And I went
And touched him and he moved not, and again
I touched him. Suddenly the whole man leapt
Straightened on the instant and addressed himself
To the sheer hill and leaning clomb. At length
It ceased into a level desolate
As death, a summit platform : the near clouds
Racked over us until the hill itself
Seemed giddy with their motion. Cruel winds
Flapt icily at our heated limbs, and seem'd
To bite away in very cruelty
The few blank shivering grasses in the peat,
Or tugged the fangs of heath long dead in cold.
And when he saw the horror of the place

He stayed himself and called with a great voice, "Here."
Suddenly calling it. And I began
To pile an altar at his word of all
The hill-side nourished, birch and pine and stunted
Grey fallow of the peat-tops. He that time
Tore at his flesh or heavily sobbing rolled
Against the shaley edges. And in fear
I built it, tremble-handed, dizzy-eyed ;
And when it rose he turned his face and cried,
"O comrade, is all ready?" And I said,
"All ready, master." Then I lit a brand
Of resinous pine storm-riven, as I strake
Two clear hill pebbles, gave blue fire free birth ;
So stood with a great beating heart to wait
The issue, ready with my torch. But he
Climbing dissipated upon the wood his vast
And throbbing frame. And after a deep breath,
He gathered up his final strength to speak.
And reached his hand, and thus his speech found way : —
"This is the end, and I am bounded here,
And all my ancient triumph is decayed.
One agony enwraps me, scalp to heel ;
So I am made derision to the gods
That smile above my torment. This is he
The eminent of labours, conqueror,
The universal athlete, whose rash arm
Would stifle down the evils of the earth.
Behold, in what a mesh of woven pain
The deity confounds him. Think not thou
Hereafter, simple-hearted as was I,
To stand between the gods and their desire
That man receive no comfort only woes.
They hate for us to stand upon our strength
And love our degradation chiefly. Thou
Consider this, my friend, and think no shame
To let them have their wills, and stand aside,
Seeing my end, and all this ruined flesh
I thought so strong in beautiful living power ;
And, lo, a little poison quenches all
Into a writhing worm, ensheathed with fire ;
The smoke-sighs of whose torment shall ascend
A music to the sleepy gods, a dream
Lulling the dew of pleasure in their eyes
With echoes of mine infelicity.
Have they not cursed these mortals long ago ?
And every curse is fruitful as a seed :

And woe to him who dares disroot but one
Thro' foolish loving of his fellow-men.
And now I die : fire only reaps away
This stain upon me. But, O comrade, learn
I may bequeath thee something, tho' I seem
So utterly naked of all honour now,
Because thou hast not left a stricken man.
Guard thou mine arrows, they to guard are thine.
The gall of hydra on their barbs is death.
And once a strange seer told me they should end
A mighty war of Hellas soon to be.
This fell not out in any day of mine.
Therefore, if blind-eyed Eris fling this dread
Upon the measure of thy time, rejoice,
For I have given thee its remedial power,
To use as thy heart bends thee. Any way
Guard these at least for ancient love of mine."
And his voice brake ; and then he mightily called,
"Light it !" and I forbore ; and he called twice,
"If thou dost love me, light it ;" and I lit.
Then came the rushing creature of the flame
Over and under, writhing into spire
And branch and eager inward-licking rings,
And mighty stifling pine-smoke, volumed round.
And I endured no longer to behold,
Exceedingly unnerved, and wailing fled
Down the sheer hill, till in a secret vale
I found a corner, and there grovelling lay,
And brought my face into my hands, and hid
The daylight and its doings out. Yet still
Sung in mine ears the horrible hiss of the flame.
Until, a great while after, I had heart,
Again ascending, from the smoulder'd pyre
To gather very reverently his bones.
These I concealed in mounded sepulture,
Guarding the arrows, which I treasure now
To feed my vengeance. Thus died Heracles.

CHORUS

Throned are the gods, and in
Lordliest precinct
Eternally seated.
And under their dwellings
Of amber the beautiful
Clouds go for ever.

Who shall dethrone them,
Who bring them to weeping?
Tho' all earth cry to them
Shall they reply?
"Dust are the nations,
They wail for a little:
Why should we meddle
With these, whom to-morrow
Blinds into silence,
And where is their anguish?
But our immortal
Beatitudes always
Remain, and our spirits
Are nourished on ichor
Divinely eternal,
From pleasure to pleasure
Renewed. Like a mighty
Great music advancing
To climax of ardours,
Thro' vistas of ages
We know we must be:
And we ponder far-thoughted
Beyond them, beyond them,
On cloudy diminishing
Eons, half moulded
To time from the nebulous
Skirts of the darkness."

Can sorrow penetrate
Even the blest abodes
Where they have builded them
Halls without care,
Citadels azurine
Up in the fleecy sphere?
Can that immortal sleep
Own unfulfilled desire,
Aping imperfect
Unexcellent men?

Gently the daylight goes
Out in the pastures,
Spring comes like a bee
To brush open the flowers.
Care they up there, if
We perish or flourish?

Sucking the dregs of
An exquisite sleep,
How should they heed
The mere anguish of slaves?

Mighty our masters and
Very revengeful,
Throned in the eminent
Ambers of twilight,
Helming the seasons in
Pastime they sit ;
Tossing a plague on some
Fortunate island,
Carelessly tossing it,
Watching it go
Strike and exterminate—
Sweet is the cry to them—
As when some hunter
Exultingly hears
The scream of the hare as
His arrow bites under
The fur to the vitals.

O, mightily seated and
Throned are our masters,
And steadily rooted ;
Their heels they have set
On Titans in anguish
And trodden the faces
Of these at their mercy
Down into the marl-pits
Of fiery darkness,
As men into clay tread
A worm's throbbing rings.

They cry to the nations,
" We strike, if ye pray not.
We bend down our eyes along
Temple and grove,
Searching the incense-curl
And the live smell of blood ;
Hating the worshipper,
Craving his prayer."

And the earth answers them
Moaning, and drowsily
Smile they with slow blue orbs,
But the smile reaches
Scarce down to their lip-line.
They care not what comes
To the creature below them.
To a god can it matter
What mortals endure?
We pity the ant-toil
And bless the bees gathering,
But these compassionate
Nothing of ours.

Throned are the gods and in
Lordly dominion
Eternally seated.
And under their dwellings
Of amber the beautiful
Clouds climb for ever.

PHILOCTETES

Ay, they are throned, so is it ; and their feet
Are on our necks. They hate us and will hate.
And this is terrible : yet worse than all
Beware the tyrant's friendship. Where is he,
Ixion, to whose hand the nectar cup
Lay like the meat of mortals every day?
The hand in hand with brother deities,
Whose friendly arms were on his neck, and his
Large ease of heaven. And even goddesses
Flush'd when the man commended. Is there change
After a little? Ay, and terrible change.
Where has the tyrannous friendship thrust him down?
Chained to a wheel in hell. Above the same
Banquet continues : not a thought about
A certain vacant place ; does any guest
Whisper a name wiped out from glory, and say
"Alas !" lest it reach Zeus along the board?
And, if the arch-god heard it, Ganymede
Would fill another beaker less in heaven.
And they must banquet on and put it down
The pale face out of memory, and the ring
Laugh with a tremble in their laugh, and shake

The wine against their lips ; and yet the cups
 Are glorious : and the easy goddesses,
 Armed by their lords at feast, lend the old smiles,
 And bend the same great eyes, and brighten on
 The love-talk ever, laugh it coyly down,
 Or flutter on the ripple of a jest—
 And he, Ixion, turns in horrible gyres,
 Orbit on orbit everlasting through
 The long light and the night, cycles of years.

PHIMACHUS

Ay, but Ixion sinned, so hast not thou.
 He could not bear the glory and the light.
 The mere man, with man's frailty, dazed and blind
 Bare not the exaltation, trembling stood
 Before the frequency, with his spots of earth
 Thick on him, and his feet bound down by weeds :
 And so he howls upon the rocks of hell :
 He fell : and wheels for ever and shall wheel.

PHILOCTETES

Why should I howl my heart out on this rock ?

PHIMACHUS

Fate ere thy mother's mother drew her milk
 Decreed this anguish on thee : bear it thou.

PHILOCTETES

Why single me for agony from the herd ?

PHIMACHUS

The hunter draws his arrow to the head
 And looses on a thickly feeding drove,
 And lets the arrow have its choice and way
 He cares not which he strikes so he strike well.

PHILOCTETES

But this is chance and not necessity.

PHIMACHUS

Ay, to the archer chance, but to the beast
Sobbing and bleeding, with the barb of steel
That breeds the darkness, 'tis necessity.
Fate sowed the seed : the appointed hours it lay
Sleeping, then ripened ; lo ! the fruit is death.

PHILOCTETES

Death is the fruit, ay so : but this same flower
Of pain is long in ripening into it.

PHIMACHUS

Let but the end rush down on us, and all
Before is made as nothing. Pain is then
Even with all deliciousness. The man
Is mock'd no longer with the fair false dream
He bears within his thought, but may not find
In the green earth so marred with pain and sin.
And so in joy he lifts his eyes to death.
And there is lovely calm, established sleep,
Ordained for ever, beautiful and strong.

PHILOCTETES

To know bad things have ending healeth much,
And they will end : for, as all beautiful life
Is yoked to narrow unenduring time,
So evil hath not linked unto herself
As yet eternal days. Something it is,
To know this, softening sorrow it cures not.
Pain nor respects the after or before,
An hour of agony would spoil a god
And make him loathe his old beatitudes.
Tell him these were, as these shall be again,
And he will answer only, "Give me change
Now, now, the eminent and absorbing now :
For I am sick of memory, loose me now."
The sting hath thrust out all things but desire
To have done with it, utterly blind beyond.

PHIMACHUS

Surely thy pain is much, and it might rend
A Titan's nerve to answer it with calm
Endurance. Yet, may be, this came because
Thou wentest to the wars with these ill kings,
And seeing thee herded up in enterprize
With these, Zeus drew his plague upon thy head
For their misdoing and no thing of thine,
For the gods sort their vengeance in no ways.

PHILOCTETES

Surely I set mine oar to row with men
Utterly evil, whose savage sensual fear
Could well appraise a virgin daughter's blood
Against a puff of wind, to feed their sails
Of vengeance, with the demon powers of the sea.

PHIMACHUS

Why camest thou to Aulis then at all?

PHILOCTETES

An oath unwilling bound me as the rest.

PHIMACHUS

Was then the king so greedy to be gone,
To choose a ready breeze before his child?

PHILOCTETES

Ay, for when calm was idle, men began
To laugh down his supremacy, and some
Made question with their souls, "Why are we here
It is a foolish quarrel." But with the joy
Of moving forward, and in the flash and jar
Of the armament, its reason was put by.

PHIMACHUS

Ay, and they lightly went upon the bond
Of a light idle word to the low imminent
Thunder of future sorrow. For man's soul
Laughs at the rain with a full sun o'erhead,

Improvident, and yet the rain must come.
And so they make a laughter against themselves
And gather into their bosom pain and death.
And so man's spirit stumbles on till its grave.

PHILOCTETES

Spirit of man, to whom these petty stings
Of pain, that seem so utterly mighty now,
Are but the vestments robing the pure ray
Of thy nobility. O life of man
Greatly afflicted and so great indeed
In spite of thine afflictions : Thou whose prayer
Asketh not love but respite from the gods,
With leave to go about thy ways in peace,
And set thy yearling son upon thy knees
In peace a little while, until he learn
Thy face a little, and the look of thine eyes,
And then the shades may take thee : since indeed
Thou hast left on earth remembrance and some root
To strike down thro' the ages. Why is this
That we should vex our souls that after us,
Our name should linger on, faint echo of love,
In some men's mouths? I know not : O thou earth,
Mother and moulder of this painful breed
Thou callest men, denying them the ease
Thou hast allotted to the beast and flower.
Or, if thou hast not denied it, then these gods
Have marred what thou hast made a gracious thing,
Infusing mischiefs in the lordly brain
And hatreds of its brothers and unrest
And mean revenges. And the wide full earth
Broadens her mother arms in love to us,
And morning takes the hills with a sweet noise,
And down the length of night the crescent dips
In flakes of bluish heaven, and blind we stand
In glories hating all things, both ourselves
And most of all our brothers. And the gods
See this and smile and jest it over their cups,
"How these poor worms will wrangle, when we have
made
Even in peace their life a bitter thing."
Is there no solace? Will no comfort come?
Nay, this whole universe is mad with pain,
As I am, and to hide it smiles to the heaven,
And all her flowers she sets about are lies

To veil her desolation and god's curse.
 As some poor woman smiles, and tries to please
 One wearied of her beauty for the love
 He bare her long ago, and whom she loves
 Still, tho' she knows how very mean he is.
 Therefore, I say, let Hope be dead, as the Love
 Of the old gods is dead, and with the rest
 Let us go bury Patience. Time it is
 That these old-world delusions ran to end.
 Zeus will not weep their ending. Let them go.
 And I, the fool that spake of comfort, curse
 My *Hope* of comfort and the brain that bred
 The thought that Zeus would pity any more.

PHIMACHUS

Behold, O prince, another comforter,
 More suasive than thy comrade, Ægle comes,
 As she is wont. Already in thine eye
 The ancient glory kindles. Blest is she
 To soothe away the demon of thy pain.
 And fair and good and gentle in her hand
 All healing prospers.

ÆGLE.—PHILOCTETES

PHILOCTETES

Thou comest to me like music, and my pain
 Ebbs out before thee. Thou dost lay thy hand
 In comfort on the throbbing and it dies.
 Thou bringest about me thy light beautiful hair
 And thy sweet serviceable hands and warm
 Bendings beside me helpful, the live glance
 Sweetening the tact of aidance. More than this
 The very footstep smooths my soul, when I
 Hardly endure the quick hot noise of the fly
 Battering the edges of the leaves ; and more
 The pure and glistening pity on the threads
 Of each unlifted eyelash, or the light
 Beneath them softened and dissolved and changed
 If my old pain is on me at the worst.
 Or the soft folded lips at murmuring
 Unworded consolation nearest sighs,

When speech, even thine, would jar upon the abyss
Of my worst hour : when poison feeds along
The chorded veins and everything is made
A black cloud and a sickness and a strife,
As tho' one flame strove with its brother fires
About my wasted flesh their wretched prey.
I have outpast all things but pity, sweet,
And men have cast me by the way to die,
Loathed, left, and done with as a noisome thing.
And yet these men were friends, as men account
Of friendship : and this pest dishonouring me
I in their cause encountered. I with these
Felt my new manhood round me, as with these
I once had felt my mother's cheek and breast,
And all their kindly ways, as mothers use,
That most their own may thrive and lay broad limbs
About the cradle, jealous tenderly
And in much love if haply they perceive
Another's child more lusty than their own.—
And I, the god-aborred, was worthy once
To reap such nurture ; I the tainted thing,
Was pleasure to a mother's lips : she made
Her still delight about me all day long.
To her the infant babblings were as sounds
Of music and all wisdom. She would pore
Upon the unformed features, tracing out
Her dream of all I should be great and fair.
And she would talk her hope to the dumb babe,
And feign its fancied answers manifold,
Out of much love : and call around in pride
Her sisters when it smiled upon a light
Or gaudy flower, and vainly towards them caught,
With tangled nerveless finger-buds. All these
Are made a silence. I shall never hear
The voice of children round me. Even she
That bare me coming to my sight would fall
Into one great and shuddering sigh, may be
Would leave me as god's curse, whom no man aids
Nor may for ever, fall'n and utterly done.
For who shall dare go fix his "nay" upon
What god hath said shall be, who with this done
Ever evaded yet unscathed to reap
The green earth at his quiet ? Therefore well
They leave me and have left me. Therefore all
Earth and her joys, except a little rill
Of pity, are secluded utterly

From the maimed beast, that once was man ; until
 The pain abolish him that chains him down,
 As with a fetter, to this island rock,
 With the fair sound of battle in his ears,
 The rumour wafted ; that he champ and grind
 His chain more fiercely, eating down his heart
 In bitterness and anguish till the end.

ÆGLE

O hero, had I wisdom in my brain
 As ample as the pity which dissolves
 My very nature, seeing thee so great
 Greatly afflicted, silent in the joy
 Of time, a life secluded, an orphan soul—
 Since it is given thee to endure these dregs
 Of bitterness—I then might comfort thee.
 But a mere maid most simple I can bring
 Nothing to help thee save a few warm tears.
 For thou art wise and I am no such thing :
 And heroes speak thy name, but I am set
 To graze my kids unnoticed in a small
 Corner of this small island. So shall I
 Meet at God's hand hereafter silent days,
 And no man after I am dead shall say
 She lived in any honour, no not one.
 But the sea fed the labour of her sires
 Ignoble, and the earth is on her breast,
 Ay, and so sleep she.—But for thee remain,
 My hero, excellent enduring days,
 When thou hast trodden all this venom out
 Of thy fair nature ; and a king with kings,
 With all that resonant glory in thy wake,
 Thou standest twixt the sun and the firm soil
 Leader of nations beautiful and strong :
 Think, in that day of Ægle near her kids
 Here in her narrow island. And she sings
 Maybe some snatch about thee, as a bird
 May sing about a star that long ago
 Beamed right down on her nest, but now is moved
 Out of her zenith on with other stars.
 So let me lead to browse my meek crisp ewes ;
 So let me at our millet sheaving-in
 Aid with my basket, or a little hymn
 Heartening the reaper. This is mine and meet

For me hereafter : but I know this thing,
That then thy earnest painful eyes shall be
A memory and no presence, and I shall go
About my daily duties very still.

PHILOCTETES

Fairness is woman's fame, and to have lived fair
Is excellent. A merely beautiful thing
By life alone and moving so fulfils
Its nature. All that look thereon are brought
To bless it, and rich joy flows every way
To all within its influence, leaving them
Heartened by sympathy and beautified.
But noise becomes not any maiden's name.
Man beats about the world and shapes result
In what his brain and hand accomplishes,
Thus finding fame. But often like a fool
In seeking fame finds death. For this one thing
Is certain, that the strange and far-away
Is dearest to the spirit of a boy.
But those old common duties and desires,
Monotonies of home and kindred love,
He lays them by disdaining : in his hall
The bride may chaunt alone her cradle song.
Fortunate islands beckon him away :
And nobly fronted in the yellow dawn
Their cliffs are gleaming : night goes down behind :
And one by one the stars break from the grey.
Ye surely now find haven. Can ye hear
The boughs at music and the infinite voice
Of the sweet inland waters? Swallows cry
And flit between the aloes : the lark goes
Away in heaven : the almond orchards heave.
The harbour margin is one marble stair,
Copsed in with myrtle : and the maidens sing,
"The heroes come, they come," and hold their arms
Seaward.—Ah, fools and blind, Charybdis churns
In all her caverns yonder and your keels
Are driving on her.

ÆGLE

Nay, my hero, nay,
I hunger not the ferment of such days.
I have not spoken like a vain weak girl,
Restless and shallow, whimpering after change,

Or wearing out a shallow trivial heart
 In aspiration vague and vast. Shall I
 Have envy if these others move in song
 When earth has taken them a hundred years?
 Is this their consolation to have made
 Their life one long disaster? As for me
 So I may stay and tend thee till I die
 Here in my narrow island, I demand
 Nothing beyond. My silly chiding means
 My only fear lest any change should come
 Between us. Selfish am I, and I think
 Sometimes, that I would rather have thee here
 Wounded and in thy sorrow, shame on me,
 Than sound and whole away about the world
 Every one's hero—jealous am I and base.
 But somehow always in those after times
 The old way of sitting here would come on me,
 Maybe at spring the saddest, for they say
 Old thoughts grow most unruly when the first
 Bird calls out to the wood. I know not sure,
 But when my brother left me this I know,
 That tho' the day went well enough with me,
 There came a vague trouble with the edge of dusk,
 And then the liveness grew, ay me, with power.
 But the old kind and motherly face of earth,
 After a little, healed me to myself
 With her old beauty, and the pleasure of trees
 And all the quiet wonder of the flower.

CHORUS

In wonder and time-mists
 They shaped it to glory
 The beautiful earth :
 They gave it a vesture
 Of sea to heave round it.
 And over it softened
 Forever the cloud-swell.

Firmly then they ringed the giant mountains,
 The ancient powers.
 The snows went on them flake by flake,
 Till spring was warming underneath
 Their hoarded silence. How it snapt with sound,
 The gleaming and the leaping and the exuberant

Wrestle and trouble of down-going rills.
The shivering forests heard it and they called
To the warm vernal waters in delight,
 “Our roots are dry, O sweetest child of the hill,
Lap us and bathe us and drench us in exquisite
 Coiling, enormous,
 Limitless streams.

Let the great light be on us like a music,
 Light and water flooding down with sound.
Smite the grey branch
 Out in crumpled leaflets :
Let the white resinous
 Ends be throbbing with the bud within :
So shall the wood lead out as with a song
 Its tender vaporous greening.”
So runs the forest music,
As all the great world goes
 Into its daylight of the year. Behold
 Winter is nature’s night
 And summer this earth’s day.
Lonely of man stood nature at her prime :
 There was no human voice about her woods.
The morning melody of birds
 Praising the gods alone.
Then on the bosom of the earth arose
 Man, Gods’ ploughman of the soil.
They gave him brain to understand how strong
 Their hands could be :
For these, altho’ almighty, needed yet
 The incense of his wonder. What avail
Omnipotence without some weaker thing
 To be amazed ? With only brother gods,
To see, as strong as they, who would create ?
Natheless these men they planted to sing praises
 And offer beast’s blood
To out-of-reach perfection,
 Mutinous grew ;
Requiring justice, beholding frailty
 Among celestials,
They laughed and straightway
 They made their reason god,
 Which all gods hate.
Therefore innumerable
 Calamitous auguries

Dismayed the roaming,
Tribeless, kingless,
Men who builded god in thought.
Till Themis came, the golden-locked one,
And taught them ritual, justice, mercy,
And many an old forgotten phrasing
Of orphic hymn,
And choral flutings and cakes well kneaded
To Pan the bud-expander :
Which is a god seated in nature's core ;
Abiding with us,
No cloudy ruler in the delicate air-belts :
But in the ripening slips and tangles
Of cork-woods, in the bull-rush pits where oxen
Lie soaking chin-deep :
In the mulberry orchard
With milky kexes and marrowy hemlocks,
Among the floating silken under-darnels.
He is a god this Pan
Content to dwell among us, nor disdains
The damp hot wood-smell.
He loves the flakey pine-boles sand-brown ;
And, when the first few crisping leaf-falls herald
The year at wasting, he feels the ivies
Against the seamy beech-sides
Push up their stem-feet,
And broaden downwards, rounded budward
Into their orbèd tops of mealy white-green.
Pan too will watch in the open glaring
Shadeless quarry quiet locusts
Seething in the blaze on vine-leaves.
He will hear the sour sharp yelping
Of the dog-troop on the sea-marge
Tearing at some stranded carcase,
Flushing up the cranes and herons.
He will watch some bloom of a maiden
From the shrine-porch slow descending,
With her flashing silver sandals,
Bound on service to the image,
Leaning hold by the myrtle bushes,
Rinsing from the lowest marble
Stair her sacrificial urnlet.
Ay, and Pan will watch the tillage,
Millet fields and mastich coppice,
Whereby sits the bronzed and rough-lipped
Bondsman with his goad to hasten

On the oxen treading barley,
Round and round ; he scoopeth eager
For his meat a pulpy gourd-head—
These old Pan considers surely
Knowing man, and all his labour,
Which the newer God-brood send him,
Lest in over-ease revolting
Man should hurl an insurrection
Titanlike against Olympus.

PHILOCTETES—PHIMACHUS

PHIMACHUS

My lips are burning with my tidings, King,
These may the god bend wholly well to thee,
My hero, with brave recompense for this
Thy pain and thy immurement. Reach thine eyes
To yonder imminent glory of full sail,
A noble galley : this is one of these
That tasted calm at Aulis. See, she bears
Upon our island with a steady pride ;
And her prow heaps the churning wave in curves
On either side its bladed edge, and spills
The foamy ridges backwards. O my chief,
Hellas remembers late her archer son.
Nine years she has made her puny wars in vain
Without thee. Now she vails her pride and creeps
To kiss thy feet entreating. Rouse thyself ;
This is the very hour of thy revenge.
Therefore be glad and answer proudly these,
Remembering how they have given into thy breast
Measure of malice and all weary days.

PHILOCTETES

He fables nothing in his honest joy.
She is of Troy this galley by yonder sun.
Thy word is working, Heracles : the seer
Lied nothing in his oracles. O brave,
I have these kings now underneath my heel—
Under my heel—I have waited surely long.
How sweet my fruit is ripened at the last :
And I will feed upon it to the core,
This mellow, great revenge : thou camest slow

Like all good things to thy perfection, camest
 Stealthily greatening in the night of fate.
 Thou gavest long so little sign, men said,
 "Fool, when the root is dead, expect no flower ;
 It cannot push the clods and bloom above."
 And still I held my hope against them all,
 And, lo, thou art here sweet, sweet, and sweet again.
 Their keel is grating on the Lemnian strand :
 And who is this that signs the others on,
 And treads this beach of ours in full disdain,
 As if it might not bear his martial feet ?
 Ay, so it is. I guessed thee long ago.
 Have I not known thee in my hate afar,
 The lying, pitiless cheat of Ithaca,
 Ulysses, king and great, whom all men hear ?
 Comes at his side one younger in peace attire
 Surely a prince, in this fire-yellow hair ;
 Mantled in gleamy scarlet twist, and one
 Great beryl at his neck splitting the beam
 That hits it out into a great raying sun.
 Him I know not, and yet his feature bears
 A hint of some erewhile familiar face.
 He looks as innocent as spring beside
 This sour-eyed raven croaking as he goes,
 With Hellas all is wrong, since that or these
 Of his great counsels bore not any seed.
 These I will watch a little from this cave,
 Then will I look into his eyes and speak,
 And give my full-fed anger torrent way.

ULYSSES—PYRRHUS

ULYSSES

Persuasion, Pyrrhus, is a difficult thing,
 And very intricate the toil of words
 Whereby to smoothe away the spiteful past
 From a proud heart on edge with long disease.
 For round the sick man, like a poison'd mist,
 His wrongs are ever brooding. He cannot shake
 These insects of the shadow from his brow
 In the free bountiful air of enterprise.
 Therefore expect reproaches of this man
 And bitter spurts of anger ; for much pain
 Hath nothing healed his wound these many years.

And only Hellas in her needy hour
Could so abase me that I come to-day
To crave of such a mean dishonoured head
These arrows and her safety. Let this be ;
If Hellas thrive, my glory let it go.
And yet past doubt we wronged him in that day.
We wronged him not indeed so much in this,
That then we cropped away this limb diseased
Out of our enterprise and cast it by
As carrion—for expedience is the bond
And crowning rule of conquest.—But in this
He may and will find wrong ; for having said
“ Begone, thou art useless,” now we gather up
The thing neglected from our rubbish heap
With “ Thou alone canst save us.” I contrived
The advice to leave him here, and counselled well
As time was then, since wrongly. Gods confound
The wisest chiefly, making witless brains
Stumble on right, that in mean instruments
Their power may tread more strongly through the world
And own no rival in the brain of man.

PYRRHUS

But when a man has trick of words as thou,
He cares not on which side he bears his tongue,
Rejoicing rather in the weak and worse
So that his art shine chief. But common lips
Stumble unless emotion bear the rein.
Words hurry down in anger ; and sense of wrong
Is voluble and there is little craft
To speak well, feeling strongly. But with thee
These natural helps are nothing, eloquent
In any cause so Hellas speed thereby.
Yet would I rather steal, as Diomedé once,
The steeds of Rhesus, than encounter here
With a smooth lying face this sick weak hound,
To cheat him back with words whom ye have left
So many years, a proverb in our camp
Of what may well be spared our kingly eyes.
And yet necessity is king and more
Than Zeus, and therefore speak and I will aid :
For here behold him trailing at his cave
Sick limbs, and now be chiefly orator,
Knowing all Hellas leans upon thy tongue.

PHILOCTETES—ULYSSES—PYRRHUS

ULYSSES

I bid thee hail, great archer, I am come
 The unwilling deputy of Greece, with him
 Thou seest Pyrrhus, dead Achilles' son ;
 Because I know thou bearest a bitter brain
 Against me chiefly of the host, in that
 I counselled they should leave thee ; as indeed
 Is all fair truth, and I love truth and lay
 This deed as bare as sunlight, tho' it mar
 My pleading undissembled : truth is best.
 And in some sort I own thee injured then,
 But only as the variable gods
 Have bent the bow of future quite athwart
 Our dreams of sequel. Since indeed I said
 To all the island rulers ringed and set
 Low-browed in counsel by the moan of the sea ;
 Surely this man is stricken of the gods,
 And stricken to his death, for I have seen
 Wounds many and wounds grievous, but not one
 That bears a clearer signet of the wrath
 Of the immortals : for when man wounds man
 The man or dies or lives, but never bears
 A flesh so utterly tainted. But this strange
 Affliction of the serpent, savours more
 Of an immortal cause, than real fang
 Of some poor worm ; unless indeed the god
 Sent it and gave it venom to exceed
 Its nature ; choosing thus as instrument
 A worm to ambush power, nor strike him down,
 Without an intercepted agency,—
 As Phœbus often strikes right into the brain
 Of the harvester and kills him like a stone—
 But, either way, God dooms him, said I then :
 And tho' I love this man and long have used
 His friendly converse, who am I to dare
 Gainsay the gods and save him ? He must go
 Lest he infect the army saved, and I
 Postpone my friendship to the cause of Greece.
 And so spoke out right sternly, wide off heart,
 Nor faltered, lest apparent tenderness
 Should thwart the emphasis of what I held

The gods would have me speak against my grain
 To their high hand obsequious, and the sense
 Of duty, higher than the bond of friend.
 Tho' I refrain my tears, my voice will fail.
 And so we left thee and these many years
 Have camped with bitter fortune, tried beyond
 The wish of thy revenge, if thou indeed
 Art vengeful still. And as the slow years went,
 I thought of thee at Lemnos in thy pain
 Lonely ; and doubted in my soul if well
 I had done to leave thee ; for I dared no more
 Interpret the gods' will, so much, so deeply
 They had vexed us many ways with many woes.
 And still I thought I have rashly sundered him
 From us as deeply guilty : he shall come
 And bear his pain among us, one more doomed
 Is nothing in a host which all the gods
 Afflict continual years. But all the kings
 Denied it yet in conclave when I sought
 To bring thee. Last in this tenth year I come
 With bare permission, having borne my front
 Thro' much reproof in craving it. 'Tis done
 And there's an end on't. But to thee begins
 New life henceforward, and the god hath shed
 Thy woes as night behind thee. In our camp
 The craft of old Machaon waits to heal
 Thine anguish, potent over every beast
 That crawls and sheds his venom till the gods
 Straighten his coils in death. The winds are fair,
 Come, I have done, forgive me, learn again
 To breathe full-breasted pleasure into life,
 Hero with heroes, whole and sound and brave.

PYRRHUS

Nay, Prince, the arrows ?

ULYSSES

Thrust not thou thy foot
 Officially into the careful web
 Of woven consolation : one word more
 Is yet too much and spoils it.

PHILOCTETES

Excellent liar,

Thou hast not schooled this Pyrrhus to thy mind.
 Words has he spoken four and yet the truth ;
 Why this is simple work, for yonder king
 Will deal by the hour his windy rhetoric,
 And, if he make cloud, ether, god, and star,
 His witnesses, he is lying most be sure.
 And he will weep you, truth how rare she is ;
 And he will weep you, how men see his deeds
 Wrongly. Ah, noble spirit and free good man ;
 Naming him perhaps arch-liar of that pack
 Of wild curs on the Hellespont that snarl
 And snarl long years, and dare not bite down Troy.
 And when a nobler creature falls than they,
 They batten on his carrion with one mind,
 And growl not on each other while the meal
 Fats them—But thee, Ulysses, I behold,
 With wonder I behold thee ; that a man,
 Canst stand in the broad sun, and lie away
 Thy very soul with words and words again,
 To which there is no answerable thing
 Under thy bosom : for thou shouldest be—
 Thou art a prince and rulest a fair isle ;
 Hast meat enough and with a certain sort
 A certain honour. Canst not live without
 This beggar trick of lying ? Some lean knave
 Get him a crust so. Is the game so sweet
 That thou wouldst rather take the devious lane
 Than the straight chariot road with other men ?
 Why hath God set no brand upon thy face
 To teach the simple nations what a knave
 Roams over them ? His tongue drops honey : his lip
 Smiles gently, smoothly, innocently mild :
 His heart is as the very lees of hell.
 Ay, he will reel you off the name of the gods,
 And weep the earth's impiety and sigh
 The innocent old days back, searching the while
 Ay, when he holds your hand, with his mild eyes
 Where he may surest stab and end you out.
 This is Ulysses, this the pious king,
 The complete warrior, guileless, eloquent,
 Who gives the gods such reverence, that he seems
 Another god beside them, not their slave

And earthly henchman. So the rumour runs
In simple narrow Hellas about his name.
Now marvel, nations, at his pious deeds,
He turns his sick friend on a rock to die,
The righteous man. He stirs no finger nail
To aid him, careful lest the affliction grow
Of some god's planting : and he chiefly fears
The gods, wise, good, and honourable king.
Nay, but consider this : for other men
Are not enough religious to forget
Their pity quite, mere foolish kindly souls ;
Whom Zeus shall never call to the empire seat,
Shall never gird with glory or give leave
After his royal model to vex men.
Ulysses was ambitious ? No, not he.
He never cast me out to rid away
A rival from his empire. Nay, he did it
Of pure god-reverence. Who was I to stand
Between him and their worship ? Yet he loved
Me much, so much, that his sheer pity chose
Some spot where soonest I should die, and shed
This troublesome anguish from me. Mean was I
To reap such kindness, and an ingrate slave
To claim to go on living after all ;
When a most pious king and wise good man,
Who loves me, for he said so, of his grace
Had given me leave to die upon this rock.
And mark this man's forgiveness, spite of all,
Now would he bring me to the host again
And heal old scores. These men are merely kind :
They've selfish reason none to wish me back.
So says this oracle of truth. Forgive ?
Why then he has so much too to forgive :
And all the injury is on his side,
And he will overlook it. Nay, this is
Too much, have heed, Ulysses, as thou goest,
Lest the gods snatch thee suddenly to their thrones,
Envyng the unrighteous earth so good a man !

PYRRHUS

By heaven, this man is wronged, and bitterly wronged,
I cannot phrase it wherein he is wronged ;
But I have sense enough of right, as I
Know where to strike at vantage the bayed beast,
But cannot give the rule of where and when.

ULYSSES

I have no answer in these ironies,
Which, as the offspring of thy wound and pain,
I pass unnoticed. Nay, as the mouth of Greece,
And now her legate, I may have no ears
For private insult. Nor indeed shall word
Of one so maimed provoke me. I have striven
These many years with slander in the cause
Of Hellas.

PHILOCTETES

Therefore hail and prosper long,
But take thy windy speeches elsewhere,
Babies there are and fools enough to gape
When thou dost deal thy slippery periods.
I care not to see lies tost up and down,
Over and under, as the jugglers use
Their snakes. 'Tis pretty play enough, but I
Have suffered somewhat in the game and bring
Small liking to the pastime. Therefore cease.
There is small audience on the shingles here.
Pack up thy wordy wares, man, and begone :
The yawning crowd disperse : the show is done—
But thou, O Pyrrhus, art of better stuff
Than to be herded up with this bald fox,
Whose few old tricks are stale and threadbare jest
Thro' either army, and a laughter grown
Most weary, since so often laughed that men
Look almost sad upon the jest outworn,
And say, "Doth this thing lead us to our wars?
But now I go to this Thessalian land
And Melibœa where my father reigns,
If, for I see the pity in thy face,
I shall find convoy, Pyrrhus, in thy ship,
To mine own land. Regard not thou the wrath
Or bluster of this disconcerted thing
That struts and calls himself a king of men.
After thou hast discharged this piety
To my great need, and set the sick man home,
Among the kindly faces and the ways
Of childhood and the hands of kin, to die—
Resume, if so thou wilt, the jar of spears]
And tug another year at Ilion's wall.
And spill thy large heroic heart away
In aiding these unworthy ; knowing not

Them worthless in thy grand simplicity.
 But spare—I know thou wilt—a little rest
 Of warring home to row me, and dispatch
 This fox without his errand to the host ;
 That the broad heroes at their tent doors laid
 May jeer him as he slinks along with eyes
 Grounded, a tongueless cur in a lion's hide,
 Armed as a hero, with his liar's face.
 And thou the while in safety pilot me
 Till thou lift out and lay my ruin'd limbs
 Upon the beach Thessalian underneath
 The sea-built halls of Pœan, eminent
 To watch the floor of waters, and give heed
 To pirate or the stranger sail, and drive
 The slaves and cattle in before he strand
 His keels, and pelt him from the rocks again
 To sea with loss of heroes and light spoil.
 So shall my father love thee and reward.
 So shalt thou go again with many stores
 Of wool and garments, weaving-maids, and much
 Slaughter of beeves, old banquet cups, and all
 The garniture of heroes. So thy soul
 Shall greatly triumph in these gifts, and hold
 Delighted way toward Ilium.

PYRRHUS

This and more
 Than this, O Philoctetes, thy great woe
 Persuades me to accomplish. I have seen
 In anger thine oppressions. Angry long
 I held my silence, thwarted, as these kings
 Constrained me being young and overborne,
 With all the noise men rumoured round their names.
 But now I see that men may thrust about
 The world and get its cry and eminent seats,
 And yet be mean in soul as some poor hind,
 Who goads another's oxen all his days
 In some glebe-corner of unnoticed earth.

Let us begone. Why doth Ulysses bend
 His angry front together? I endure
 To the last thunderbolt this eloquent Zeus,
 Unquailing now. I see the right at last
 In wonder that so flimsy a trick of cloud
 As this man's word could mask it : henceforth thine

I fear him nothing, being stuff as good
 Myself and better fathered. Who shall dare
 Compute Achilles with himself? Come, friend,
 Dispatch, prepare, I lead thee home, tho' all
 The kings in conclave rose and said me nay.

ULYSSES

This hound is gone trailing his weak huge limbs
 Under the deepened ledges of his cave,
 And Pyrrhus props his lean side like a son.
 So I am baffled by a fool and boy.
 They seek, brave pair, the arrows, ere he goes,
 Craftily hidden away to baulk our need.
 And had I other here save this soft boy,
 This weak soft youngling with his mother's milk
 Scarce dry upon his lips, who thrusts himself
 So easily to thwart me—Had I one
 As Diomede, or even a lesser man
 Who'd hold his arm and lips, and let me fend,—
 I'd strangle Philoctetes as he crawls
 Out from his cave emerging, clutch the darts
 And rid the isle of carrion. A shrewd stroke
 Of policy. Consider, at one blow
 This mulish knave dead as the earth he has long
 Polluted, and no less the very keys
 Of Ilium's capture mine—mine. How I'd grind
 The kings into my very chariot-knives,
 And spin the war out to my soul's desire ;
 And fan them into fevers, down and up,
 With hope one day and scorning next ; and live
 Exceeding sweetly.—And yet the risk of it ;
 For this same milky Pyrrhus, his word given,
 Will keep to't, as some stupid wether keeps
 A sheep-track leading nowhere. He will fight :
 Fight? Ay, would Pyrrhus fight. And I should quench
 My light for Hellas, which may not be done.
 I will go pace this beach a little while,
 And with my breast take counsel ; for weak fate
 Hath made an idiot lord of wisest men.

CHORUS

Come forth, thou beam of God,
 Come forth along the musical light waves,
 Mighty and more and strong,
 Tasting the ripples' sleep :

Breathe to Thessalian shores this weary man,
Light wind that goest slow :
Heal him ye, airs of sea,
And all good things of fate
Feed him with comfort till his father's land.

Hath he not told his foes
Right worthy answer as a warrior may ?
They came about him in his pain with guile
Yet prospered nothing here.
He bent his brows and answered, and their lies
Fell dead before his feet.
Therefore, shall he lose vengeance ? Nay, but taste
Deeply its sweetest ways.
This is the hour of his revenge : shall he
Then pity like a girl,
Whom they dishonoured, crawling now in fear
Humbly to lick his feet ?
But he will hear afar their useless war,
And laugh it in his sleep.
He knows the arrows of fate are all his own ;
The bolts of the impregnable
Music-built citadels
Are his to ward or loosen at his will.
Ye will not lure his aid :
Ye pray to one in sleep :
Ye gave him such sweet portion long ago,
'Tis likely he should rise,
And kiss your cheeks like brothers', and say " I help
As ye helped me, my brothers, when the curse
Fed newly on my flesh."
And shall ye dare to wail, because this thing
Is strong upon you now,
Measured in mighty justice to your hands ?
Was pain about his couch
The matter of a morning or a day ?
Could he put down and take it up again
At his own soul's desire ?
Ye made him mad with your oppressions then,
Seeing his demon strong
In anguish, on him like a weak sick bird
Ye set your carrion beaks.
" Go to, his god betrays him," cried ye then,
" Helpless and weak and sore ;
'Tis safe to torture whom the gods betray ;
Safe and religious too."

But Nemesis, slow hound that never sleeps,
 Saw ye did bravely then,
 And stored her vengeance that should slowly come,
 Intenser since so slow—
 War on, my leaders, batter at the walls.
 But he, your victim, nears
 His father's kingdom and his health again.

ULYSSES—PYRRHUS

ULYSSES

O Pyrrhus, thou hast misconceived my drift,
 Utterly headstrong thou hast stricken down
 This Hellas, humouring a mad foolish man,
 Who neither knows our meaning or his own.
 And thou, new warrior in our nine year toil,
 Whom I had yoked as comrade to myself,
 Tho' thou hadst hardly dipped thine hand in war ;
 And chose thee out before these other kings
 Older and wiser ; for I said, he is young,
 He will obey me, and, obeying, more
 Profit than other's wisdom. For this thing
 Is chiefly good, when one guides well, the rest
 Footing the road he leads them with one mind.
 But thou hast broken off from the safe band
 And taken across a very perilous tract
 After some marish meteor. Like a steed
 Unbacked thou startest from the battle road
 Because this madman by the hedge is set
 Jingling his wrongs. Let the Greek cause go rot,
 Since certain kings neglected to ensure
 Most delicate lodgement for this raw disease
 Called Philoctetes. Up, ye lazy kings,
 Bathe one and all his ulcers, take his gibes
 Demurely crouching, for Achilles' son
 Will have it so or blast you with his ire.

PYRRHUS

Being set to do this thing thy words are wind.

ULYSSES

Ay, and this done on Greece a bitter gale.

PYRRHUS

Justice is more than fifty armaments.

ULYSSES

When the Greeks curse, will justice fatten thee?

PYRRHUS

The brave do right nor heed result like knaves.

ULYSSES

The blind ox butts the wall and brains himself.

PYRRHUS

He is no hero who has pity none.

ULYSSES

And of a girl each wounded cur draws tears.

PYRRHUS

Wounded some day thou wilt thyself bewail.

ULYSSES

Not if Achilles' kin has dealt the spear—
Behold the man returns, creeps from the thick
Eaves of his cave ; these words are very vain,
Go thou thy way but rail not. To his face
At least we will not shame this Hellas here :
Hereafter more—so will you—but now peace.

ULYSSES—PYRRHUS—PHILOCTETES

PYRRHUS

Peace as thou wilt but as I said I go—
Lo thou, Ulysses, what is here, regard
This Philoctetes he is changed, is changed,
Some god hath surely wrought upon his face.

Speak man, thou tremblest very much, hast lost
Thy voice and breath together? This is I,
Pyrrhus, art mazed? Keep thine eyes fast on mine.
There is a wild sea yonder, nothing more.
Thou knowest us now—ay surely—see he clears
The film and wildness from his look: no word
Yet and the lips move—lay him thus—nay so.
Patience, the man will beat back yet to life.

PHILOCTETES

I can speak now—can speak—yet how to speak?
Moisten my lips with wine to strengthen me.
My master, I have seen him, Heracles,
Ay, plainly as the shadow of thy sword
Is sharp in sunlight upon yonder rock
Before thy feet. Now am I strong to speak;
And I will tell this wonder from the first.
See, man, see, Pyrrhus, I am calm, most calm;
I can speak temperate words and hold your hand;
Ay, look about me on the cloud and wave;
And know the same old stable world; as if
There were no wonders, but the daily march
Of nature, that disturbs not one cloud wisp,
Tho' Zeus himself should slide from Heaven in flame,
But would send up next morning her old sun
And set him all the same. And men would go
About their trivial labour, feed and sleep
And talk their homely matters all the same.
And I that loiter in my telling, tell
Unwillingly, I know not why. It seems
Unholy almost to commune of it here
In the large sun and with the everyday
Unaltered look of the world. And yet he said,
"Reveal it," therefore hearken. To this cave
Ye saw me enter, Pyrrhus bearing me,
And all my soul was glad with homeward cheer.
Him I dismissed within a little way,
For only I must search the innermost fold
Of the cave's windings seawrought. Here beneath
An altar, hewn myself these many years
Of living rock, I had hoarded time as long
The arrows of my master: for he seem'd
Worthy an altar, as the man I had known
Nearest the ancient gods to suffer and love

Sublimely, and I knew he must be great
Since the new god-brood utterly hated him,
And gave such death and labour to his hand.
Therefore I, kneeling, drew with reverent hand
These arrows from the altar, naming him,
Thrice, Heracles, and rising to be gone
Felt more than saw an excellent great light
Rise from the altar, shape itself, and beat
In on my brain like music ; giving glare
And terror, woven with strange breathing sense
Of joy in pain, and pain fused back in joy.
It held me very dumb and very still.
All eye and ear, my lips were baked to the teeth :
And then the gradual feature line by line
Moulded itself upon the screen of light.
And, as the Iris marks its bounds and bands
From merest haze to her sharp-chorded seven,
He came above it there complete at last.
So that the casual stranger who had seen
Him once would say " the same," and yet great change
Was on him like a god. The old look of pain
So rolled away in radiances. White jets
And little spikes of flame shot in and out
The crispy locks immortal, interlaced
With rosy shuddering shocks and sheets of light.
And yet I saw the glories of his eyes
Were human yet and loved me, as a soft
Suffusion veiled their immortality.
Then his lips trembled, and I heard a sound
As of a single bird in a great wood,
With sunlight blinding down thro' every branch,
And utter silence else over and round.
" Comrade, well done : not vainly hast thou borne
Pain hand in hand with greatness. My old robe
Of agony hath even effect in thee.
But be thou comforted beholding me,
And know that it is noblest to endure :
So shalt thou reach my brightness. And now hear
And do this thing I tell thee. Go not thou
Homewards, return thou to the host with these.
It must be that my arrows shall take Troy.
Learn to forgive, tho' these deserve it not.
Go thou and prosper, so shalt thou ascend
To some fair throne beside me, lord of pain,
Fed with full peace and reaping grand reward."
And darkness rushed between us.

PYRRHUS

Lo, this man
 Has dazed away his living spirit again
 By this strange tale. Hath he no comrade here
 To tend him? This were better than our care.
 Let us go search the isle for such a man.
 As for this chief we neither know his ways,
 Nor the remedial helps of his disease
 Intricate. Time is flowing as we stay ;
 Ay, for the hour is urgent that we bring
 These arrows and this leader in our ship,
 Since now he bears so fair a mind to go ;
 And this thing seen, hero or spectral shade,
 Hath moved him, where our lips were merely noise
 Of babies wrangling with a sleepy man.

ÆGLE—PHILOCTETES

ÆGLE

Look up, my hero, 'tis thine Ægle's hand
 Sustains thee : rumour of the old fishermen
 Has told me all thy vision : I behold
 The echo of its glory in thy face,
 And with thy joy my heart leaps up in tune.
 Thou goest with these men to thine old renown.
 The host has spoken in their mouths thy praise :
 And called thee with one calling as a god
 To lead them up against the obstinate walls.
 And these thou shalt prevail against, and thou
 Only, tho' much fair flower of men and steeds
 The black earth holds before them wasted down.
 Ay, many a boy has gone to the great wars
 And made his sisters buckle on his mail,
 So restless to begone ; and on his head
 The old sire has laid his hand and blest his way,
 While the sail flapt. And he, the young one, bears
 A spirit very proud and tells his soul,
 "There is no reach of hero effort laid
 Beyond the power I know within myself
 To grasp and make it mine—thoroughly mine."
 And he, poor heart, has withered with the herd

For all his youthful glowing. But to thee,
 Remains, my hero, this one excellent thing,
 To gather in one swathe these dead men's deeds
 And end the reaping of the field of war ;
 To be the column-top that sees the light
 First and the glory on it, tho' all the tiers
 That built thee up see nothing. And this much
 Is Ægle's little tendril of a claim,
 Upon thy love, my hero, a full weak thing ;
 That she in all thy worst disparagement
 Believed thee greatest, and foresaw these kings
 Would so believe thee, when time led their slow
 Dull hearts to wisdom : this thine Ægle knew.
 And now my soul to the very core is glad
 At this thine exaltation. In this thing
 I shall find recompense when thou art gone :
 Now therefore go, and Ægle blesses thee.

PHILOCTETES

Ægle, I go : this vision and these kings
 Persuade me : yet I cannot bend my soul
 To leave thee ; and how ask thee to forgo
 Thy kindred, following a sick wounded man ?
 For, lo, I am going to a strange land, with all
 The dread of war about it and rough ways
 Whereon no damsel loves to cast her eyes.
 And, more than this, consider if thou goest
 Thou wilt have there to lean on no one thing,
 Except a man the gods perplex with pain.
 But here, if wearied out with tending me,
 The faces of thy childhood bring thee ease.
 And so thy mighty pity bears thee thro'
 A labour hardly with these aids endured :
 Here canst thou rest a little from the sick man.
 Here hast thou sister choirs at pleasant song
 Driving the shuttle briskly. Thou canst leave
 My cave an hour with little noiseless feet
 And leave my woes behind thee. And their love
 Will hearten thee to endure the atmosphere
 Again of my affliction. No such thing
 Shall wait thee yonder : faces crafty and hard ;
 Men who have sold their hearts to thrust themselves
 Forward in blaring consequence ; mock-heroes,
 Mock-kings, unkinged by noisy passions that tear

To shreds the inward majesty of the man.
 With these, the herd and drove, flatterer and fool,
 Jumbled together in wild enterprise,
 And caring most to bicker among themselves.
 And thou, detesting these and all their ways,
 Wilt only have as comfort one sick man,
 And to endure his humours. Which may not be.
 Therefore, my darling, bless thee and remain :
 Seeing the years shall bring thee ample amends,
 When thou forgettest all this careworn face.
 Then may'st thou love some other, whom the gods
 Behold with eyes more gracious. Then to thee
 Sweet and calm joys of wife and motherhood,
 And little earnest faces and nestling heads,
 Shall recompense thy holy and tender care
 Which I can never recompense, and all
 Thy pity on a very abject thing.

ÆGLE

I may go with thee, beautiful and sweet,
 Excellent tiding, I may go with thee !
 Nay, let this word be set about with gold
 To keep against my bosom or in my hair
 For ever. O my Lemnos, thou art made
 A thing of nothing when he bids me go.
 O valleys of my childhood, there is fallen
 A mightier spirit on my soul than your
 Poor gentle influence, erewhile so sweet.
 O sister choirs, weave on and prosper fair ;
 For never more shall Ægle link the buds
 Among you, never watch the careful beeves
 Treading the grain, never see build the swallow
 Against her father's roof, never take more
 Her pitcher to the well—All quite, quite gone.
 Ay, so it is, I must be weeping since
 There are some tears against my hand, and how
 They came I know not : for I am very glad.
 My sisters, nay, I am not hard, I weep ;
 But all about me seems to have bloomed into
 Such shining, that my heart sings like a bird ;
 Must sing, tho' all are weeping, sing and sing.
 There is a god that draws me and his steps
 Ye too shall know hereafter.

PHILOCTETES

In God's name

Go with me then. O excellent heart and dear
Of woman, and thou, Ægle, dearest head,
Give me thy lips. How should I give thee praise,
Since love exceeds all praising? Brave, meek dove,
Thou hast chosen a sad nest for thyself, wherein
The pretty shining plumage of thy youth
Shall flake away to dimness ; and I reap
In this thy loss all harvest. Hear, thou sun,
And thou immeasurable sea, and all
Lispings of margin woods, this woman here
Has given away in pity her great soul
To tend a wounded creature all his days,
Ay, such a leprous thing as I may be.
Her if I called divine, ye scornful gods,
I should dishonour deeply : since indeed
These ways are little your ways. She is more,
My bird of comfort, than your scathing light
Which ye reach out for harming man alone.
Ye have made our pain your pastime ; and I smile
That human pity, deem'd so vile of gods,
Can cheat their careful vengeance of its sting.
Therefore I say the thunder only of Zeus
Shall part this Ægle from me.

ULYSSES—PYRRHUS—ÆGLE—PHILOCTETES—

PHIMACHUS

PHILOCTETES

And, you kings,

Behold I come late warrior to the war,
Wounded I come since ye would have it so ;
And a strange voice has spoken on your side
That this world owns not. Ready am I and tame,
Great kings, to do your bidding ; and this maid
Will lead me to your ships and go with me,
And Phimachus, old comrade, aids our way.
Ye make it nothing that I tamely go?
Nay, by the light and by this maiden here,
My vengeance was as sweet as life to a boy.
And now I throw it down and cast it by,
Wherefore? Nay, not ye heavens for anything

That this ignoble fool can understand
In his false rhetoric. If to such a man
I seem the crazy and uncertain jest
Of dream and vision ; if to such a soul
To love the memory of a comrade dead
Seem but a girl's perfection, a sick whim
To let my anger go when one I loved,
Speaking behind the cloud and veil of time
So bids me—Why it must be always so ;
The lesser nature never yet conceived
Nobility above it, nay but held
As folly what it could not understand
With its mole eyes, ignoble ; ay, but thou,
Pyrrhus, I see this in thy glittering eyes,
Canst understand me somewhat. Nay then, boy,
This womanly dew is braver on thy lids
Than this man's easy dog-like laughter sits
Sneering his soul down—Ay, and Ægle too
With thy sweet eyes new flooded into rain ;
Why this is an old tale to thee, my child,
A most sad old one. You have wept by me.
When there was no one else would come or care.
And you have crept and given your little palm
To nest in mine, when your voice broke, as all
The comfort you could give me. Ah, dear head,
Have I so wrongly put mine anger by ?
Doth thy sweet bosom scorn me for this thing
Refusing vengeance ? Soft as light in cloud
Thou givest answer with a rainy smile.
Sneer on, Ulysses, now if thou canst sneer ;
Being so more wretched tho' a painless man
Than I in any sorrow, tho' a king
Of woes with mortals ; since some love me still :
But thee, poor worm, no fellow-creature loves,
Altho' they use thy cunning in their wars.
Sneer on, poor instrument of venom, I think
That I can bear such sneering, ay, and more.
But, ere I leave these precincts of my pain,
I will speak something to these Lemnians here ;
A simple word, my kings, and easily said,
No wordy toil of Ithacensian lips.
Hear, O ye Lemnians, hear a full brief word
Before I go, for surely from this day
My voice shall be a silence on your rocks,
My face a dimness with a few old men
Remembered hardly. As day fathers day

'Tis meet my memory pass ; ay, meet that all
Change and be changed. So roll the stars along
And the great world is crown'd with silent lights
Watching her changes, and no thing endures.
Wherefore ye fosterers of the broken man,
Whom ye denied not strangered when his own
Despised the sharing with him light and air,—
Prosper, ye kindly fishing folk, and thrive
Always of Zeus ; knowing your simple ways
Are more than royal hatreds. Eat sweet bread
Because ye love no fellow-creature's scathe.
And I, this farewell spoken, speak no more,
This only—He is noble and utterly great,
Noble and great he only, who can say,
Whatever plague the strong great gods impose,
“ Be it done but I am free. My spirit knows
Its freedom tho' ye crush me quite away.
My last dim thought upon the very edge
Of silence shall breathe ‘freedom.’ For no hand
Of god or demon can abolish this.”

CHORUS

Man, let them have their way.
Let them, O man, prevail :
Mighty and more than thou,
How should their anger fail ?
Why settest thou thy baby palms
To wrestle down the thews that may not tire ?
Why wilt thou vex thyself to be as they,
Weakling of sorrow and sleep ?
Why wilt thou thrust about the world for peace ?
God is at peace alone.
Take from their careless hands
The morsels of their pity as they fall :
Take from their scornful brows
The curse, and call them just.
Nay, thou art foolish to have any pride :
They use thee as they choose.
Count every happy dream
As stolen from the envy of their power.
Turn at the last to slumber, if no great woe
Hath taken thee, secure,
That under the warm earth to vex thy sleep
Their hands can never come.

ORESTES

A METRICAL DRAMA

CHORUS

FROM the wave in thy purple ascend,
Crown of day, king of rays, lord of dreams.
Be thine excellent strength without end,
As eternal thy garment of beams.

In the tremble of manifold winds,
In the flush and the flicker of rose,
The waves they have seen thee arise,
And the voice of their clash thrills and throes.

Thou hast made the least brightest of these,
That roughens the glance of the sea,
To exult, to be fire, to be music,
At the sound of thy glory and thee.

In the hush of the ripple grow gold,
Till thou crumble the cloud in thy joy.
Let thy flakes and ray-branches unfold,
Smite the mist, mellow orb, and destroy.

O drench us with flame from thy wing :
Let thy bright arm break darkness like sleep :
Fling light, like a tempest that sings
And seethes from the core of the deep.

Be upon us, vast light, like a dream,
Be about us, pure noon, like a fire ;
Enfold us, embrace us, extreme
Mighty glory beyond our desire.

From the fire of the fountains of God,
Swift art thou as thunder or death.
The blind silence of air thou hast trod,
Thou art shod with the speed of gods' breath.

As a god thou art perfectly fair.
Thou art strong, thou art swift, thou art bright :
Thou shalt rouse thee, and stars from thy hair
Shall fall like a raining of light.

Our eyelids endure not thy blaze.
Thou art excellent over man's need.
We bow down our heads at thy gaze,
We quail at the pulse of thy speed.

Thou art young, thou art young in thy ways.
Earth ages : thou art as of yore,
Still robing the might of thy face
In fiercer effulgence and more.

Thou art God and untiring and strong :
Thou retest for pleasure, not need.
Though the way of thy glory be long,
Thy feet shall not falter or bleed.

Shall it weary thy steps like a steed,
Shall it deepen thy breathing to pain ?
Shall it dry thee away like a reed,
Shall it sift thee and shake thee as grain ?

Nay rather the heart of thy fire
Sheds over in bountiful rays,
As it touches the verge of desire
Attaining the goal of thy ways.

Go about olive cloud of day's end :
Be silent thou leaf and thou rose :
Float down like an island and wend
God of sun to supremest repose.

ORESTES—CHORUS

ORESTES

Are ye so joyful that the day begins

CHORUS

Ay, for the light is warm upon our brows ;
And each new hour is healer of old woes.

ORESTES

I blame you not. Be glad, old men, be glad.
If ye expect at God's hand some good thing,
Why half the gift already ye have known
In hoping it may come ; and if it come not
Ye are no worse because of that sweet lie
Called hope, immortal, a strange god. Why these
Are on the very edges of their graves ;
I, in my fullest youth, when most men find
Their life one dream of glory and of love,
Detest the rising of this sacred light,
That gives my kingdom joy. Poor kingship mine—
To be a king ruled by a woman's will,
To be a puppet in a soldier's hand,
To wish upon my people infinite good
And hardly ease one bondsman in a year—
So runs my life. The land is full of blood,
And the boy-king sits by and sees it shed
And may not move a finger. Irony
Of kingship, to whose glory each mean wrong
Lifts up his voice to ease it of its load :
While this same king, a shadow with chained feet
Feels heavy hands about its neck, and hears
A low eternal whisper, " Sit thou still ;
Bide thou and wait : the glory on thy brow,
Poor mock of kingship, surely is enough.
Thou art a boy, sit still, and we will cope
With this rebellious people in thy name.
Is there no blood upon thy father's grave ?
Is there no Atè floating like a dream
About these halls ? Her beautiful sad eyes
Are very wakeful, and her phantom hands
Beckon for ever terrible ; behind
Her white feet and the reflux of her robe,
She holds the strong hounds of her fury bound,
And one she calleth Sin and Blood his mate."
O royal halls accursed with great doom,
O firm pavilions of my warrior sires,
Here was your day ; your changes and desires
Flared out above the heavy golden bowls,

Till Atè beckoned each one from his seat
 And laid him suddenly silent full of blood.
 I fear the silence of your banquet hall :
 There is a ghostly lip at every cup
 Along the vacant tables, and a scent
 Of blood arises from the lees of wine,
 And the old stains grow darker on the floor.
 O grim dead faces crowded at your feasts,
 I am your son, and only on my hands
 There is no blood, and ye shall have great scorn
 Upon your son, because I am clean of death ;
 But Zeus hath given me curses of your deeds
 Clean as I am, degenerate I endure
 The taint of your oppressions, O exult,
 If so ye will, and hence derive all joy,
 That in your urns ye are terrible to harm.

ORESTES—MEDIUS

MEDIUS

Give ear, Orestes ; the strange waves of time
 Have rolled upon our shores this chance event,
 That at Larissa's gate with crown and stave
 Crannonian heralds enter, and their lips
 Are heavy with the messages of kings ;
 A bitter word from a detested race
 The Scopadæ, our kinsmen and our foes,
 One with our blood but in our hatred twain :
 These look not for thy good, so thou beware,
 For a king lives in watchful days and fear.

ORESTES

Brother in love, poor courier at the best,
 Why do you din this "king" into mine ears ?
 Why waste your breath and colour on this news ?
 Tell it my robe and crown, they are the king ;
 Or shall my regent mother fast of news
 While I am fed ? I thank you for this love ;
 But, in God's name, I am merely your poor friend,
 And mock me not with this old lying song
 I hear all day : for I am almost sure
 You are the only man that loves me here.
 Consider then I am a fine great king

That cannot move one soldier without leave,
 Of that meek soul, *my* general, wholly mine,
 Because he is so careful lest the reins
 Should slip my puny fingers, that he keeps
 The royal driving bench sole charioteer.
 Tell me, good Medius, since I am unthroned,
 I'll be a loyal subject, if I knew
 Whom to obey, that's the confusion of it :
 For now my mother is regent like the moon ;
 And then this Simus rules us like the sun ;
 I shall turn out a rebel, ere I know it,
 By crying out at night, long live king Phœbus.

MEDIUS

That Simus loves you, lord, I do believe,
 But he loves all things after his own will.
 For there is this infirmity in men,
 That, having watched one growing from a child,
 They hold him always child, and cannot see
 The mighty years breathing all wisdom in :
 So ripens he, but they the old men wane—
 Behold, my lord, the envoys.

DYSERIS, SIMUS, AN ENVOY. HIS ATTENDANTS,
 ORESTES, MEDIUS

DYSERIS

Speak thou again thy message to our son,
 Whose unripe years unmeet for such a load
 Have laid his sceptre in my woman's hands ;
 For youth has but one wisdom, to allow
 The sway of elders wholly on its days.
 Therefore our son sits at one side of power,
 Speaks thro' our lips and governs thro' our eyes.

SIMUS

And deem not, envoy, this a feeble throne
 Because a Queen is regent : in her hand
 The army lies obedient, since I am
 To her least breath obedient, and I move
 The army as the whisper of the wind
 Leans all the infinite foliage one white way.

ENVOY

The Lords of Crannon to Larissa hail.
 Know then, Orestes, that the years are young
 Since thy sire came against us with much noise :
 His horsemen laughed against our gates, they said,
 "We shall prevail, we only. Surely now
 They lie beneath the shadow of our sword :
 Is there a god to save them ? no not one."
 Then we rose up in anger, and behold
 The harvest lay as embers, and a smoke
 Went up among our vineyards : ye were brave
 Only in mischief, and the cry of us
 Broke you like water. Number out the slain ;
 Search in their faces for the lordly men,
 The captains and the princes and a king :
 Thrust ye a sceptre in this dead man's hand ;
 Ye will not give his fingers craft to close.
 Thus with your armies we have dealt, and still
 Our wounds are green upon you. Ye abode
 Since in your precincts, as still dogs, to whom
 Our mercy gave time to heal up your sores,
 Knowing ye had no heart to take revenge.
 But now the swift wing of our vengeance holds
 To the Dolopian valleys who have heard
 Our fear and have not felt it ; rebel-wise
 Boasting themselves ; to abolish these we go.
 So shall our city, emhtied of its best,
 Warm back your chidden courage ; and our beeves
 A tempting war, all plunder and no blows,
 Flood out your rabble soldiers to our scathe.
 And tho' returning with one blast and tread
 We should make these as mire upon our ways,
 We will not that our old men sit at home
 And have such curs come yelping round their chairs.
 Therefore, Orestes, I demand this thing
 That thou deliver hostage to our lords,
 Either thyself, or of the Aleuad race
 The nearest to thy throne ; that ye will hold
 All peace, us absent ; that our foals shall graze,
 And our corn redden in his time : and more
 Thou shalt not chase a locust from our vines,
 Or hew one oil-tree from our orchard sides.
 But if ye set your stubborn face to send
 No surety that ye mean to hold your hands,
 Then, look your graves be ready, and make ripe

Your eyes for weeping ; for we come with power
 To bruise you in such fell anger, ere we go,
 That your lame city shall not dare to raise
 One finger till we come again in peace.

DYSERIS

Ye have done an arrogant message with proud lips,
 Ye know your herald office guards you well.
 Your lords are brave against a woman's throne.
 We will turn over these big blaring words
 In our good time, so leave us, and expect
 In certain hours our answer.

DYSERIS—ORESTES—SIMUS

DYSERIS

And our son
 Is he so voiceless, when these men have scorned
 His father's ashes, and the general realm
 Cracks under my weak hand? No word, my son?

ORESTES

Why should I speak, my mother, or why refrain?
 You know I am but shadow of your will.
 You will do things after your desire
 And not my counsel. Therefore am I dumb
 But most obedient. Say, I am a boy :
 Call back the envoys, use thy smoothest tongue,
 Or blow red-hot defiance down their throats,
 How should I care? I can play even and odd.

DYSERIS

So is my care repaid with sullen words,
 So is my mother's love held love of power.
 Women, I charge you that ye hate your sons,
 Leave to the spoiler all their heritage,
 Guard nothing for the boy, or he will say
 "Thou hast usurped an honour that is mine."
 I tell thee, boy, thy dumb obedient ways
 Are rank rebellion. Say, thou wilt be king ;

Hath a king then no mother, hath Zeus set
 No law of nature binding even these?
 Is this fair world one godless, loveless jumble,
 Full of strange beasts and evil-lusted things
 Wrangling together for a greasy hide?
 Nay, in God's name, I will put off this power :
 Get me a little wood-lodge, and mope there,
 Teaze wool and weep, correct one serving-maid,
 And creep down to Larissa once a-year
 To get me a new girdle, and taste a cup,
 At my son's palace-gate.

SIMUS

By Pallas, queen,
 This is an idle contest with thine own.
 Let thy son rest ; resign ye both the power :
 So shall these men have answer of the god
 Whose shrine this house has thickened with much gold ;
 This shall the god remember in our need,
 And save us with his wisest oracle.

ORESTES

O mother, there is no oracular voice
 So fit to guide a man and keep him noble
 As his own spirit. By my father's grave,
 By the last clasping, mother, of his hand,
 Leave me to sit an hour upon his seat
 And give these men their answer. For I know
 It is a peaceful god that Simus keeps
 To oracle his bidding, a calm god,
 Even if a man shall smite him in his face ;
 Willing of hostage, a poor mild weak god,
 Crying to Crannon, ye are great my lords,
 Deign, ye great lords, to set your iron heels
 Upon our upturned faces.

DYSERIS

Simus, go,
 Bring us the god's word, for by this we stand.
 Heed not this peevish boyhood. If he rail
 Against the gods, how shall he spare his own ?

DYSERIS—ORESTES

DYSERIS

And I have nursed this thing and called it son,
 That makes its wicked laughter at the gods.
 This I have fostered, this I have given the breast,
 That tells me rule is not for womankind;
 I have presumed, have taken on myself,
 Have hired a god to lie upon my side,
 A poor weak mumbling copper-greedy god.
 Ah, madman, is the sky so very clear
 That in no cloud sits scathing flame of Zeus
 To reach thee? I to let thee reign, and wind
 In thy first hour of kingship ruinous war
 About Larissa like a net, to sate
 Thy lunatic humours? I, that love thee still
 Somewhat, am brave to hold thee from thy bane,
 And say, thou shalt not reign, if my poor life
 Can keep thee crownless till thy wisdom grows.

ORESTES

ORESTES

And I believe that some one man or two,
 Some poor or ignorant man about this land
 May envy me, Orestes, as I stand
 Here at my palace-gate, broad plains beyond,
 Under a quiet sky, and at my feet
 The mad glad year flushing in myriad blooms
 Why are things happy? Wherefore with such care
 Dost thou trim out thy little bell, road-weed?
 Nothing shall heed, if thou art beautiful,
 Or the first foot should crush thee; as I would,
 But do not, being a tender milky fool,
 Hating myself, and losing the pith of time
 Upon thine insignificance. To act
 And to act merely, cleansing from my brain
 These weak irresolute fumes of thought, that hold
 My hand suspended from the vital sword,
 That sets me with this Simus throat, to throat,
 And thrusts these boasters with defiance home.
 Ah, to have done with thought and see my way,
 Then were I man. Or, would that God had sown

That blind bull-instinct in my soul, which drives
 Sheer at the end, and counts not. And I stand
 And tell myself, fool, thou must act and now,
 The very edge of time and of thy fate ;
 Let this dial creep an inch of shadow, and lose
 All—What is all? Life I suppose : not much.
 The curse of all my nature, self-mistrust,
 Makes me still palter here.

CHORUS

Who hath revealed his name,
 Father of clouds, eternal as death is,
 Who, ere the mountains came,
 Sat in the morning light and had no care,
 Great and austere fair?
 Under his feet the dew and spice of dawn
 And little wells arose :
 Murmur and supplication, laugh and prayer,
 Came up like vapour to his footstool there :
 And the faint pulse of distant throbbing woe
 Rose as an echo very far below,
 A moan the wind beats back, a sound that cannot grow.

He will not comfort any in his bliss,
 To whom the treasures of the isles belong ;
 Wilt thou draw down his feet with sacrifice,
 Or lure his meteor presence with a song?
 Put by thy hymn and weep thy weeping, he is strong.
 He is so strong, desire of him no aid.
 Melt out the rocks with weeping at thy harm,
 Thou shalt not make him as a man afraid,
 Or overcome the shadow of his calm.
 His brother gods that feast up there with him
 Are bowed before him ere they touch the cup.
 His presence makes their lesser glories dim,
 And underneath his throne earth's wail comes up.
 And now men praise him that he is so great,
 And now they curse him that he lets them die,
 And now some blessing feign, dissembling hate.
 But one and all he lets their wail go by.
 And now he slumbers on the tinted cloud,
 While sick on earth the feeble nations fear
 With eyes that fail and forehead earthward bowed,
 "Zeus, if thy name be Zeus, waken and hear."

Descend and break the mountains, if thou hearest,
 Awake, arise, and smite the secret seas.
 Put on that strength of panoply thou wearest
 When thou dost rise to prosper thy decrees.
 Say to the deep, "refrain thy ocean roaring ;"
 Command the darkened places of the wind.
 Bid thou the cloud dissolve her stately soaring ;
 Speak to the tempest, "flee thou like a hind ;"
 Bind up in vapour thy strong golden light.
 Make pale the mild uprisings of the stars.
 Scatter in weeping the broad earth's delight ;
 Assume thy vengeance, thou of many wars.
 O tried and terrible, resume thy sword,
 Mighty in visitation, prove thy spear,
 Lay to thine hand to justify thy word,
 Zeus, if thy name be Zeus, waken and hear.

Ah lord, ah strong and sudden god, whose feet
 Rest on the throb of all created pain,
 Thou feelest thy dominion is so sweet,
 Thou wilt not loose one rivet of our chain :
 Thou wilt not say, "Arise, and taste again
 Love and the genial hour,
 Where no cloud came :
 Clothe back upon my darling's cheek its flower,
 And fear no blame.
 Was she not wholly sweet and bound to thee
 With innocent joy ?
 But this I did destroy
 By the great might and scathe of my decree ;
 Worm, what is this to me,
 If time flowed sweetly once and now is ended ?
 Before thou knewest I was great,
 Thy lips my ways commended,
 When thou in old estate
 Wentest so light of dream,
 With love that nature gave,
 To find a sister in each wave,
 A brother in the flower,
 And some old blind mild god thy father of the hour."

Thou art not mild, mysterious ! and thine eyes
 Reach as the lightning reaches, and thy hands
 Smite down the old perfections of the earth
 That came with blind old Saturn's dead commands,

And totter with his fall. The new god stands
 Supreme, altho' his royal robe is wet
 With his sire's blood ; and in his ears as yet
 There waileth on a father's agony,
 And yet he falters nothing : and shall we,
 Seeing he has no mercy, have any fears ?
 Nay, rather crave his thunder, if he hears
 And is not drowsy with his long revenge.

Who shall ascend unto thine iron eyes,
 Who shall make moan or prayer that may prevail ?
 For thou art satiate with so many sighs
 I do not think, O Zeus, thou wilt arise,
 Fed with delight and all sweet dream and thought,
 Thou wilt not rise supreme
 In thy beatitude ;
 For fleeting love is nought,
 And human gratitude
 In thy cold splendid cloud, must tremble to intrude.

Let us go up and look him in the face,
 We are but as he made us ; the disgrace
 Of this, our imperfection, is his own.
 And unabashed in that fierce glare and blaze,
 Front him and say,
 " We come not to atone
 To cringe and moan :
 God, vindicate thy way.
 Erase the staining sorrow we have known,
 Thou, whom ill things obey ;
 And give our clay
 Some master bliss imperial as thine own :
 Or wipe us quite away,
 Far from the ray of thine eternal throne.
 Dream not, we love this sorrow of our breath,
 Hope not, we wince or palpitate at death ;
 Slay us, for thine is nature and thy slave :
 Draw down her clouds to be our sacrifice,
 And heap unmeasured mountain for our grave.
 Flicker one cord of lightning north to south,
 And mix in awful glories wood and cloud ;
 We shall have rest, and find
 Illimitable darkness for our shroud ;
 We shall have peace then, surely, when thy mouth
 Breathes us away into that darkness blind,
 Then only kind."

SIMUS—EUDICUS

SIMUS

I tell thee, light thy tripod, lose no time,
Set thy prophetic gear in working trim
And bring me these four words "Orestes goes
As hostage." Spin the rest out as you please,
About God's will or man's moralities—
Despatch, I'll hear your scruples afterwards.
Tell the god it was my fault, if you please.

EUDICUS

Kinsman, I owe you all things, and I were,
Without you, as the meanest leprous thing
Huddled in rags upon our temple stair :
Yet, I entreat you, bear me not too hard.
I have sold the god before at your great word,
And live to say it with my brazen lips,
Daring to crawl in the sun's sacred eye ;
Abject I am ; and now you bid me sell
My king—nay, let me speak, for speak I will—
These kinsmen are as treacherous as the grave ;
And I must sell Orestes to their fangs,
Making God murder that have made God lie.

SIMUS

I never knew a priest who'd yet do wrong
Without some prelude of his good intentions,
The worthy men cling to appearance so,
Well, now you've had your say and get this done.
I say you *must* : still stubborn ? Well, hark here ;
You have a daughter : she's a tender maid
And you are tender of her. But maids' feet
Are apt to slip. I hope this one's may not,
But, trust me, Sir, I fear it if I find
You stubborn to my wish. 'Tis not so easy
To hold my hot rash soldiers under rein,
Whom the law dares but wink at. There, it's done ;
Since your eyes tell me you consent, my friend,
And you shall bring me in this oracle
With all the inspiration hot upon it.

EUDICUS

EUDICUS

And I, this demon's kinsman, love my child :
 And I, this demon's slave, must do worse work,
 Because I fear him. I am an old weak man
 That have done evil, reaping little fruit
 Of evil in evil days. I shall go down
 Contented to the dust : and Minos there
 Shall crease his brows and mutter in great gloom,
 Saying "This wretch hath surely found of sweet,
 Little in evil. Let him go, he has been
 Enough above tormented." But, my dove,
 My one pure blossom, shall aught ill reach her,
 Which one more crime to her old father's load
 May yet avert ? I'll take this guilt with joy.
 Certain it is I forge this oracle ;
 Yet will I warn Orestes thro' her lips,
 For I do love the youth, and there is bud
 Of love between them, as I think.

EUDICUS—ARCHEDICE

EUDICUS

My daughter,
 We are well met,—I cannot tell you much ;
 There is a grain of mischief set in earth
 Likely to fruit most deadly. O my child,
 I trust thee tho' a maid for secret lips—
 These things are death, being said in open day—
 But you have hourly speech with the young king,
 And no one heeds his talk with a mere girl ;
 Warn him from one that loves him and knows all,
 That as he loves his people and long days,
 He go not hostage with these envoys home.

ARCHEDICE

My father, I could tremble and weep tears
 As maidens use, but these I will lay by
 Till I have done thy bidding ; I were base,
 Seeing our noblest endangered, to be dainty
 To step in safe ways only. Is it much

To do my king such service? Is it more,
 Than once my ancient playmate did for me?
 When, children both, we, playing in the ling,
 He tore a coiling serpent from my arm.
 Shall I then tremble? My girl arm alone
 Shall reach and pluck this snaky danger down,
 That rears itself against our royal head.
 I would that Medius had some hint of this,
 He would help me and guard Orestes best.

EUDICUS

See, thou speak not with Medius on this thing :
 Have with Orestes only thy prompt word.
 Why we shall have a dozen helpers soon,
 In this our secret : go, content thee, girl.

ARCHEDICE

Ah, you know not how Medius loves our king,
 Watches his eye, guesses his every mood,
 Breathes in his favour, gladdens in his smile ;
 Send Medius with him, shall no harm ensue,
 Yet am I silent, since you deem it best,
 I go to warn Orestes, and ye gods
 Clothe with persuasion now my feeble lips.

SIMUS

SIMUS

This boy grows restive in his leading-strings.
 Mistrusts me, is grown dangerous, wants to rule.
 I rule the mother, and with her I fall ;
 And when this boy shall feel his baby-feet
 A little surer on the ground, we pack ;
 And we that ruled so firm and sat so high,
 Are cast aside like worn-out hunting hounds.
 Shall it be so, child prince, with thy desire ?
 Shall I, the warrior, kneel at this boy's feet,
 And say, " My lord, if I have served thee well,
 Lend me a cottage. I grow stiff and old,
 But fain would crawl my days out somewhere near,
 Whence I could see thee rule and bless thee ruling "—

Nay, let Olympus crack and each god's throne
 Tumble to Hades, if I do not hate thee
 In thy mute still resistance to my sway,
 And the reproach of that pale boyish face ;
 I have no cause to love thee, and my hate
 Shall be the hatred of a god that slays
 And leaves no token. And I love my power,
 As the great purple Zeus loves his, when one
 Would filch it and he wakens ; and a mist
 Of wrath makes tremble the ambrosial courts.
 Touch a god's power, he throws his thunderbolt,
 And I launch mine, so safe that none can trace
 The hand that dealt it. And all men shall cry,
 Shame on these traitor envoys in whose train
 Orestes went and never came again,
 Under their keeping hostage. Crannon slew
 The sire in open fight. Conclusion good,
 That, finding easier way to rid the son,
 They'll not be so nice-fingered to refrain
 For a poor oath or twain ; when one fat bull
 Having his throat cut duly to the god,
 Sops up the perjury of it.

ORESTES—ARCHEDICE

ARCHEDICE

O my lord,
 How can I make you think I am in earnest ?
 If only a feeble girl my words are weak,
 Has not my poor pale face some warning in it ?
 You only smile, and trifle with my hand,
 As if I said, the mulberry crop was late
 Or like to be ; or that my tiring girls
 Had sung me a new lyric song about
 The swallow in the acanthus column head
 Thinking the white sails of the ships her young
 Gone home before her ; or some everyday
 Speech of a girl's most trivial peaceful moods ;
 When we must chatter anything because
 We are happy. I beseech you, Orestes, hear,
 I, the weak girl, say to you—death, death, death.
 And thrice again. And could I warn my lord,
 I would repeat the weary burthen over
 Of death, death, death, till sundown. O forget

The weak girl once you played with : I am changed,
 A woman ; for this death play of the world
 Lets us be girls no longer, to plait wreaths
 And smile and trifle. Nay, by Artemis,
 I will forget henceforth to be a girl—
 Return not, O return not with these men.
 Lo, I have said ; and like a seer foretell
 Death to my lord if I speak vainly now.
 Respect the message and despise the seer
 So thou obey. Consider, if Zeus spake
 Thro' me, my ineffectual lips would change
 The thunder warning to a maiden's threat—
 Believe me, Zeus speaks now and bide at home.

ORESTES

Why, these are wild words for my pretty maid,
 I am not worth so fair a Pythoness
 To trouble her sweet bosom about my doom.
 Dear, be content, this poor unvalued life
 Has been so rocked with danger and racked with care,
 It is not worthy the sweet drops your eyes
 Have trembled on their lashes, no not one
 Round perfect tear from either precious light
 Dimmed with the pity of old days for me.
 Ah, dearest, my best days are knit with thee
 And Medius. What is this you say, my sister ?
 As if with you and Medius long ago
 I had not trusted my soul's secret ways,
 The old weak dangerous groanings of my life ;
 The sullen wretch disprinc'd, and fettered down
 In stately bondage, old before his time,
 The boy without his boyhood, the court slave,
 With a fresh scheme a day to free himself,
 And a most craven hesitating fear
 Lest his thought turn a monster in the deed.
 Add to so mean a creature, that he knows
 A curse is on his race ; whose sure still feet
 Strengthened of Zeus in his good hour to come,
 Sits at these royal gates invisible
 Until God say, "Arise, and enter in,
 As you have waited long, so sweet shall be
 Your vengeance." And, who knows ? if pity for me
 Has given all quickness to your innocent ears
 To catch the deadly feet and trailing robes
 Soonest of all ; ah dearest, let them come.

ARCHEDICE

You have made me weep : I reel in this great dread :
 And my feet fail as tho' I trod among
 Deep drifted sands : the life about my heart
 Fails off like water. O, pity is a thing
 Mighty to break the very nerve of life.
 Ah, your hand here, Orestes : I am well
 After a little : I will not tremble more—
 I have forgotten all I meant to say—
 Indeed, your words have moved me very much.
 I see my poor lips will not make you heed :
 I am most foolish and had best begone.

ORESTES

Tender and sweet, I love thee for thy fear ;
 But fate is stronger, dove, than pity of thine.
 If this lord death is seated in my path,
 There is no side road, dear, I must go on.
 Better to meet him smiling than with tears,
 Careless than careful ; let us reason this.
 The wise man sees in life no thing complete ;
 Love only is a music heard at times
 Among the noisy nothings that consume
 The pith of life, void effort, stale desires,
 And nights of awful silence laid between
 Days where no light is sweet upon the eyes :
 Therefore, I thank thee for thy warning, sweet,
 Fearing not much, so evil are the days,
 Save I shall be where thy smile may not come.

ORESTES—DYSERIS—SIMUS—EUDICUS—MEDIUS—

THE ENVOY—ATTENDANTS

DYSERIS

Envoys of Crannon, if we answered now,
 Wise in man's wisdom, which is sure of feet
 A little while and falters at the end,
 We could mouth answer arrogant as ye.
 But we have laid our pride upon the knees
 Of ever-wakeful gods, whose oracle
 We are dumb servants wholly to obey—
 Eudicus, priest and seer, read in God's name.

EUDICUS

So please you, I am old and feeble-tongued
 Before this frequency to mar God's reply.
 Let Simus read, so shall no one word fail,
 He hath the throat of Ares and Zeus' eyes.

SIMUS

The God who sits in intense light beyond
 Our darkness, under whose eternal eyes
 The cloud of human sorrow like a dream
 Floats by, and his breath guides it. Under whom,
 Like some far mere with ripples, human life
 Now burns with light, now chills with blue-black storm,
 The mighty saith, "Why will ye weary me,
 Children of men, in my ineffable joy ;
 Why will ye taint the sweet of my repose
 With groaning and with travail and with tears ?
 Your life is nothing to me, nor your joy.
 Am I the judge of death and fate and time ?
 Yea, as these things reach you and yours, I am none.
 Yet as this little city that now calls
 Up to my throne, hath set my sanctuary
 With cedar ledges and with golden lavers,
 Making my name a glory, I will answer
 To these men only, "Let Orestes go
 With these men fearless, going he shall gain
 A quiet empire and much after-peace."
 Thus far the god : and thou, Orestes, heed.
 Do thou God's word and he shall fence thy throne.

DYSERIS

And is our son obedient to begone ?

ORESTES

Ay, mother, most obedient, and thy son—
 It is a strange superfluous word this "son,"
 Meaning—well, that's no matter now, but strangely
 You have recalled some silly memories
 Using it now, just ere I go : they are gone.
 Ready am I, ay, merry to begone,
 Why I shall be as safe upon my road
 As in my palace here, therefore most safely.

And I will trust the faith of these same men
 As your and Simus' love. How am I riched
 In trusty loving friends. Sirs, let us go ;
 There are some hours of sunlight to run down,
 They'll serve us well. You have fared well I hope
 In our poor palace ; do you like this strange
 Quaint tracery of our walls ? I think the artist
 Was an Athenian : nay, Sirs, after you ;
 Mother and trusty Simus, if "farewell"
 Were not unnecessary on a journey
 So safe as this, I'd say it.

DYSERIS—SIMUS

DYSERIS

So he goes.

He is well gone— you told me it was best,
 Told me and showed me, did you not, my Simus ?
 Confirm me now : I wished him gone, God knows,
 And yet a kind of dread has taken me,
 That these men lie, or that *you lie* ; forgive me,
 I am only weak and womanly with you.
 The world holds me an iron queen to break
 All opposition, my son holds me so,
 An iron woman with one dream of power—
 Ay, and till you came, surely power was all,
 And found the secret of my heart, that I
 Dreamed not could ever move at a man's step.
 Did I not hate him, this boy's father ? Yea,
 I wept, but there was no salt bitterness
 In all my ready widow's tears ; as these
 Laid down my clumsy spouse with a knave's knife
 In his fine armour joinings, and they said
 The hind that slew him had a mere wool coat.
 And then you held the army, and at first
 You feared as all men feared me. How you dared
 Speak love to such a woman ? I remember,
 The strange and sneering laughter at my heart,
 That I should hear this tale of girl and boy ;
 And verily I think, had I not feared
 Your men, I should have mocked out to your face.
 And so, as you persisted, day by day
 It came less strange—No, I will not go on,
 But for this boy, my Simus, is he safe ?

He thwarts me, and I love him not, but still
I would subdue him wholly to my will.
But I would keep him safe of other scathes.
Tell me, these envoys, can you trust them, Simus?

SIMUS

Queen and my love, we had no choice but yielding.
Orestes they demanded; being strong
And knowing us revengeful, no mean head
Could give them any safety of our peace.
Had we refused to send, what else but war?
And our hired spears that overawe the town,
Are good enough for plunder and stone walls,
But against Crannon's armies like a smoke
They would be broken. And Orestes ran
More risk abiding war than going in peace
At these same envoys' heels. Be thou content;
For all is well, and thou shalt rule the days
In large dominion a great queen and fair.

CHORUS

Who may forbid a king that will do wrong?
He is so strong,
And master of the time, and fenced with purple sway.
And, like a god, to him belong
The hours to bring him sweetness on his way,
The meek hours at his will and footstool chained away
To waft a little perfume of keen song
To make their lord his joy;
To smooth his brow from fold, and light
The brooding royal eyes an instant with delight.
A king who may forbid?
The man-god in his glory, crowned and strong,
Rises to reach his arm toward his desire,
While in his face a hunger beams like fire,
Stern as much fate and terrible as death;
So that men hold their breath
As like a tempest to his wish he goes.
Who shall stand up before his face and say
"Lord, thou wrought a shameful thing to-day,
A wrong eternal whose great curse shall grow
In after years to work thy children woe.
Merciless, hast thou heeded any cry?"
And he shall frown reply,

"Let this one worm writhe on. For who am I
To stay my hand for such? And thou beware
Lest interceding a worse woe catch thee."
Therefore are all men mute. He rules and will not care :
He rules and honour clothes his years supremely fair.
So of his crime he takes the sweet, and dies
With the full savour of it in his mouth,
And keen delightful eyes ;
While yet his lips a quiet laughter keep
At fools that fear the gods. So turns he to his sleep.
And men will come and say,
"His crime is surely done and clean and passed away.:
Can god account with these dry bones for wrong,
Or make them live again?
His vengeance is not wakeful, and this one
Hath made him rest, and done
His full of pleasure and escaped god's pain."

Not so, ye fools and vain,
Heap up his grave and listen : from the ground,
From the grey bones when years have greened his
mound,

An Atè vengeance rises. As soft rain
Her feet, and like the fluttered leaf, her robe,
And like a dream she goes
Pale-eyed and unrepining. And she knows,
Patient to wait, that years and years again
Will not erase the stain.
For which she watches the accursed race,
The seed of him who prospered his disgrace,
And made his laughter at the gods and died.
And well she knows that vengeance waxeth sweet
For keeping, and her face
Is pale for want of blood, and yet she curbs desire,
Altho' her veins are fire,
And years are very slow,
She bides her time to strike, and needs no second blow.

Strange is the vengeance of our lords on high,
That strikes the child and spares the guilty sire ;
Gives him fat lands and lets him calmly die
Full of sweet bread and lord of all desire.
And men look sadly as they close his eyes
And wind him round in purple for his rest :
And, save a little murmur in the land,
They say he sleeps with the eternal blest.

Ay me, for that man's children, and again
 A triple wail for those who call him sire.
 Cry for the old hereditary stain,
 Bewail the Atè that can never tire.
 Hope not, thou blameless son, she will refrain :
 Sprinkle with ash thine head and thine attire,
 Thou shalt not turn her steps, nor yet assuage her ire.

The wise have in their wisdom said,
 That ever since the world began
 All blood the father king hath shed
 An Atè visits on his son.
 Surely some royal house may dread
 Her silent feet, to whom is given
 To search old crime forgotten as the dead,
 And vex the seed of those who hated heaven
 Therefore, O Lord, thy vengeance passes over
 Ignoble heads as ours.
 Therefore, I sit foreboding, to discover
 Some mighty issue that most dimly lours.
 Therefore Orestes' safe return I pray
 With bated breath and fear.
 Lest those two great ones who divide our sway
 Should frown such prayer to hear.

MEDIUS—ARCHEDICE

ARCHEDICE

I would Orestes had not gone alone.
 You should have hung, ay Medius, on his hand,
 Fought back refusal, run thro' all degrees
 Of subtle-voiced entreaty. Are you sure
 He would not have you with him? O ill pride
 That will not halve its dangers with a friend.

MEDIUS

I was importunate enough, my sweet,
 But with a sad brow he put back my hand,
 Saying, "The taint of fate is heavy on me :
 I charge thee leave me this small joy in woe,
 That I have dragged down these steep fateful ways
 No soul I loved : lo, I entreat this joy :
 Ah, friend, suppose a flock in fair crisp fields

Feeding among the flowers, by the cool beat
Of some hill fountain ; and of these god's curse
Searches one out and singles him for death :
He will no longer feed with those he loves ;
But some great instinct, higher than he knows,
Urges him out to creep to some lone place,
Far from the bleatings and low chiming bells,
And die there lest his taint infect the rest.
Wilt thou have man more selfish than the beast ?
If my vague fears mean nothing, then I need
No escort ; but, if otherwise, this tree
Is touchwood, branded for the hewer long,
And only spared, lest crashing down it tear
Some healthier sapling's branches under it."

ARCHEDICE

Ah, Medius, if I dared unveil to thee
One corner of a secret vague and deadly,
Which came to me unsought, and made my breath
Catch with the terror of it newly found—
And I must tell no man, not even thee—
These are no vague fears of my lord Orestes,
But they have root deep, wide, and intricate.
And I, weak girl, must hear these things and fold
My useless hands, and close my trembling lips.

MEDIUS

And thee alone Orestes told this dread ?

ARCHEDICE

I may not even say who told it me :
In pity do not question any more.

MEDIUS

It *was* Orestes : great and chiefly blest,
Ay, tho' he walk to death in this same hour,
Having thy love. My doubt breaks up, ah sweet,
Altho' I never doubted, never gave
My weakest idiot wish an hour to dwell
Beyond the thought but that this must be so—
I pray you let me speak a little while
Any mad treason to my friend and king,
And then I will hold peace for evermore,

Against the only brother of my love ;
 Whom I *will* love still, spite of this mean god,
 This demon selfish Eros, that would strain
 Brothers asunder : O forgive me, dear,
 But I was burying all my hope so deep,
 And taking one last glance at its fair face ;
 That in my hour of weakness, I forgot
 And raved a little at its funeral
 A few mad raving words, unworthy of all
 The sacred love between my prince and me.
 Ah ; you will not believe me noble more,
 And I have cursed myself to your pure eyes
 With this mean selfish babble : dear heart and wise
 And tender, this concede me at the least,
 That till this hour, when some fierce shameful fiend
 Tore me within and mastered me to speak,—
 I saw the flower of all his nobleness
 Expand beneath thy beauty and thy breath.
 I saw thee with his love more beautiful,
 I saw him with thy presence strengthened, sweet,
 As roses feed on light of intense air.
 I saw this thing, loving and blessing both ;
 And then I had nobility enough—
 I fallen since so meanly may boast this—
 That till this hour no breath of treason-love,
 Broke in on this sweet music. Now, ay me,
 Sweet trust is ended for me with you both.

ARCHEDICE :

Indeed, indeed, O Medius, you are gone
 Upon wide ways of speech most wide astray—
 I cannot tell, indeed I hardly keep
 My reeling brain, such changes, strange and new
 Leap out upon me. I, who lived so still,
 And all these things crowd on me in a day.
 You have forced me into speaking, lest all harm
 Ensurue, these things unspoken. O, indeed,
 I cannot speak these matters : you are cruel
 Mistaking thus : will you not see? Orestes
 Has never loved me with the love you mean,
 Gentle to all, more gentle to a girl
 And his old play-mate : but for other thought,
 He sits a prince among the clouds insphered
 Out of my reach, almost a god ; and I,
 Loving in this regard, have given him long

Obedience, admiration, and all love
 Except the love of lovers. I would sere
 My hand to the bone in serving him, and yet
 If he should kiss me for some service done,
 T'would be as tho' I kissed Apollo's feet,
 As he stands marble in my father's temple.
 Or give the image life and godlike ways,
 And let him walk among us many years,
 Give me to know him as I know Orestes,
 Think you, I'd love him, Medius, as you mean?
 Without equality no love can grow,
 This must men find or, finding not, imagine :
 Hence has love root, nor without this endures.

MEDIUS

I have been strangely clouded by this error :
 Now is my sky right suddenly fair beyond,
 And all my baseness to my friend is made
 Suddenly nothing, like a great black cloud
 Split by a heap of flying light and crumbled.
 I breathe in joy, like a large rushing air :
 O best and tender, thou may'st hear me now,
 Hear me, and find no falsehood on my lips
 To him our king to whom we twain will bind
 Our chiefest service ; and that we may serve him
 Together, there is sweetness in the word,
 Dear, let me bind thee with the dearest bond
 That this earth owns. O, I have shivered long
 In that chill shadow laid beyond the rays
 Of thy white presence. Like a burning light
 Thou movest intense morning with a sound
 Of breezes in among my days : O great
 Dawning of gold and rose : I love thee, love thee ;
 Yea, I will clothe thee round with glorious love,
 Clothe thee and hide thee from out all gods' eyes,
 Lest thou allure them from their barren clouds ;
 I'd set thee in the deepest heaven a star
 For manifold adoring—I would spread
 My hungry arms all night to thee in prayer,
 Thy beam should touch me only on the earth,
 The waters should not take thy glitterings,
 The crisp firs should not silver under thee.
 Forgive me, if I soar up like a lark
 In ardours, and in fancies, and the wild
 Exuberance of light, that breaks my words

Like clouds in pieces wildly—O love, love,
 According to thy sweetness take thou me
 Not to mine undeserving : rightly mine,
 Have we not been together many years
 As children use : so let thy hand lie there ;
 There is a fire comes from it soft and sleek.
 You were a little maiden, I remember,
 And I remember how you wet your feet
 Wading for Iris, and leaning you could only
 Touch the creased silky curtains of one bloom
 That tore and snapped off short upon the head ;
 And you would have me dry your feet in grass,
 And seeing the gold anther dust among
 Your hair, I kissed it—as I may, my sweet,
 Now, may I not ? But thy ripe blossom of lips
 Draws down my face like that old flower you brought me.

ARCHEDICE

Ah, Medius, God has made this day for me
 Tender and bright and gracious in all joy.
 I will not tremble any more, dear heart,
 Let me look straight now into thy true eyes
 And tell thee nothing shaming all my soul.
 Love is not love which has to the loved one shame,
 I will not fear to tell you everything ;
 That I have wondered, ah, these many days,
 If Medius cared for such poor maid as I.
 And sometimes when I saw you glad to come,
 As the sun fell, and make me leave my weaving
 And walk among the vineyards, and look out
 To Pindus crushing in his crags among
 A rosy crumble of the clouds ; each leaf
 Around us seemed to live with the low voice
 Of the infinite insect whisper, and I used
 To think then that indeed we loved each other ;
 And yet you said no word of love to me.

MEDIUS

The glory of my life has massed itself
 Into this moment ; all succeeding years
 Be fed with rosy rays from this one point,
 When you and I gave each the other, and made
 One crowning life and perfect fruit of time :
 One, one, for ever : dost thou understand,

Nor shudder at that dim and mighty 'always,'
Where linking thy sweet arm in mine, we go
Unknowing, but, with me, an inseparate life?
As when two children the first time we went
To school together, 'twas an unknown journey,
Some poor half furlong, yet how vague it seemed
And terrible ; we went out hand in hand—
We are but children now in God's high way :
But with me thou wilt fear not : and I seal
This sacred compact the old lover's way :
Ah, dear, thy lips have filled me like the morning
With dew and perfume.

ARCHEDICE

Dear, my hair has fallen :
Now let me put it back. O wonder of love :
Yet is not happiness a selfish thing,
I had forgot—Orestes and his danger?
O, I foretell, he will be glad of this,
So the fair heavens preserve him safely home,
Which all gods grant. We'll make him guess, my Medius,
What has befallen : nay—you shall not ; come.

DYSERIS—MESSENGER

DYSERIS

The place is private, man, speak out, and make
Thine eyes more quiet : is Orestes dead,
Or Crannon marching on us ? Neither ? Then
Get back thy face in colour, smoothe thy brows,
And make thy sides heave less : speak, and speak soon.

MESSENGER

Lady and Queen, the gods are good this day
Unto Larissa ; such a deadly thing
Crested against this kingdom is full fear
Have they put forth their strength, and dashed to ground.
For know, when lord Orestes and the rest
Of the Crannonian envoys, in slow train
Had issued from out the city gates, they wound
To the open, with their faces set south-west
Riding to Crannon. The great land lay bare

For the first hour with pasture-plain, and spread
Of maize and millet ; over which the wind
Taketh his pastime with all murmur, and bound
Is none to stay the level of his feet.
After a while, the uplands with their girdle
Of mulberry and of oil-tree, break the plain
With knoll and breasted ground ; and, last, behind
The barrier of the mighty broken hills
Laid black in heaven, seamed into gloomy vales
With flushes of fierce rains, and scored asunder
With lapse of weathered crag ; huge island rocks
Fallen for ever from their seat of stars,
Bedded in turfy shales, the crags above
With all their splinters raw by the loss of them.
Thro' these the defile winds : a sheer rock-wall
To right rubbed smooth by the clinging backs of mules,
To left a torrent, a tall pine-tree's height
Below it, churning white its green-black shed
Of sheer ledge-running water. Here the steeds
Clomb by in single rank, Orestes leading ;
When from the very heart of the mountain road,
Where a man's cry is like a grasshopper's
Against the torrent thunder, these two men,
Perfectly armed, fell on Orestes ere
A man could say "behold them." One at his throat,
While the other stabbed the steed, and so all four
Fell struggling in the path some four spans wide.
And first the beast fell over the sheer road
To the horrible torrent, crushing through pine-boughs,
And, tangled in the reins, it dragged the man
That stabbed it ; and he, seeing death below,
Plucked at the rock and tore a great slab out,
Falling, but fell a horrible soft heap
Upon a ledge and round him boiled the flood
But could not move him, but it bore the steed
Far down : and then Orestes, thy brave son,
Feeling the mighty spirit of his race
Rise in him, and a joy, like no joy else,
To be about the dizzy ecstasy
Of a life conflict, wrenching from the rock
A boulder fitted to his hand, he smote
The robber full in the mouth, and stunned the man.
And all this in an instant, so the first
Of the envoys being twenty paces back
When the men sprang, came only up to find
The conflict over, and to help thy son

To bind the fallen man, whom now they bring
 In bonds to question whence this treason grew.
 And now already is this rumour blazed
 About the city, and the priests flood out
 With votive hymn and fillets and long staves
 And cups of wine wool-crowned ; and all the flower
 Of maidens meet them, plaiting roses in
 Their soft and heavy lengths of tangle-gold,
 Moving in dance their tender limbs, and making
 Their light robes' refluece flash like light behind
 In the low sun ; while flute and cymbal throb
 Thank all the Gods— There, plainly thou can'st hear them.

DYSERIS

I hear the voice as of a people's love,
 When the king comes from victory, I hear
 One pulse of adoration to the gods.
 He is cold of soul, who when a nation flows
 One-hearted to the altar-step, will keep
 His knee from bending ; and I too will raise
 My voice among the very least of these,
 Since my son lives. I will forget my queendom
 And push among the market-maids to get
 A crowded kneeling corner at the shrine.
 Thou hast done thy message fairly : with thanks go !

DYSERIS

DYSERIS

I am alone at last : what does this mean ?
 I fear and dare not shape my fear in thought.
 I only in this universal joy
 Stand brooding with my mantle round my brows :
 I only, a mother, with my son new-snatched
 From that unknown conclusion and fierce dread,
 Loiter to meet him with my sullen feet :
 Am I not glad then, nay, I think I am not !
 And yet I know that had he died, my sorrow
 Would have bit keenly enough : Why this cold mother
 Spoke angrily to Simus when he went
 About his safety, and now knowing him safe
 I care no jot : am I a monster then ?
 I were a perfect queen, but for one spot
 Upon my iron will, that one taint love.

So am I bound to Simus. Strange it is,
That I, whom all obey, should have found one
My master ; him I fear because I know not
Whither this man may lead me, on what ways
Of bloody mire, not to be trod of queens.

CHORUS

O Delian, hear us from the echoing leaves,
From our own Tempe's shore,
Ere dawning on night's blue her purple weaves,
And the large light is flashed on Pindus hoar
As snows in twilight ; where the rocks make head
To crowd their terraces in heaven, and shed
Alternate gleam and darkness from afar
Between the moon-set and white Eos' car
Bringing sweet things yet bearing sweet away.
To thee we pray,
Lord of the triumph of the light, give ear.

O Delian, hear :
And thou incline, fair sister sphere ;
Whose sweetest light
Dissolves the cloud upon thee with delight,
To save thy beaming from the wavey floor.
Hear us before the island rocks are white,
Hear us before the rippled mists are bright,
And all the voices of the light begun,
Where the lark rises ere the mellow sun ;
And the rills sparkle all awake to glide
Between the pale star and the beating tide.

O, hear us from the dells where thou delayest,
Bright lord. The nereid slumbers in her lair,
Sick with thy love, till thou thy strength arrayest
In the deep morning, thro' the burning air :
Thou goest as a warrior in whose hair
The leaf-bands of thy conquest newly shine.
Thou goest blithely as a lover, where
Her lips await thee with their glows divine,
The fleeting Daphne ; whose white breast divides
The laurel branches, thine own fleeting Daphne,
Longing and yet perverse the sweet one hides
Among the osier arches,
Trembling as each ray searches,
And fears thou may'st not find her and pass on.

Is there, O lord, such triumph as thine own?
 Light, strength, and speed,
 Have builded up thy throne,
 A throne indeed.
 Thy majesty shall we confine
 Within some puny shrine,
 Or dream the essence of thy glory may
 Inhabit earthly fane,
 Who dost the stars disdain,
 Or temple dim,
 To whom the rounded heaven from belt to rim
 Is but sufficient way?

Still, Phœbus, to thy throne our vows be paid;
 Nor let blue incense fail,
 Nor choral song,
 Because, O king of triumph, thou hast made
 Our king prevail:
 And with thy breath hast made him very strong
 To conquer, as to thee, king, rightly doth belong.
 Therefore our city throngs to sing
 Its pæan unto thee,
 Seed of our ancient kings, a king
 Thyself, Orestes, as a king should be.
 Who, taking vengeance, made it so complete,
 That we must fling these flowers about thy feet,
 And gird thy sword with wreath, thy brow with bays;
 Therefore entreat we Phœbus, that this town,
 Helmed by thy hand and fenced with thy renown,
 May taste sweet ease and length of peaceful days.

DYSERIS—ORESTES—THE ENVOYS—A BOUND
 SOLDIER

DYSERIS

Hail, O my son, I greet thee with full heart;
 From what a danger thou returning bearest
 Beautiful victory on thy helm, and sweet
 Garland of praise in thy strong hand. O boy,
 Kingly and born of kings, thy mother I
 Greet thee with golden joy; O land, break out
 Into all singing: let thick incense hide
 In clouds the altar, and one throb of mirth
 Call Pæan over Ossa to the sea.

ORESTES

Mother, this thing is said, and well no doubt :
 The words are warm, I thank you as I ought
 To thank you : weigh my thanks against your love,
 You will not totter with the burden much.
 And now, O queen, retire to the inner hall,
 For I must question with these envoys much
 Of this maimed thief : this is no woman's show ;
 We cannot choose our words to suit your presence,
 And this same question is about my life,
 A matter in which I cannot, with your leave,
 Admit your regency to judge about,
 Being the only poor thing wholly mine :
 The rest judge you in purple : now begone.

THE ENVOY

Thou hast well said, Orestes, and I swear
 That Crannon aids thee to the end in this
 To sift this web of treason utterly out.
 We have seen the drift of this conspiracy :
 The ill-done business of this robber's knife
 Was to have laid its blood at our clean doors.
 Some would have said, "This traitor Crannon tears
 A hostage life in the mountains." And all Greece
 Crying full shame, we had in vain denied,
 With whom you went alone your enemies.
 It was a nice contrivance, and we owe
 The authors ample amends : let these rest sure
 Of payment when our messenger shall come
 To Crannon with these tidings. More than this,
 Thou hast, Orestes, our full heart and aid
 To take thy power upon thyself : we have seen
 Thee true and brave among this town of curs.
 Speak as thou wilt and trust us on thy side.

DYSERIS

I will not tarry long : ye are my foes
 And may say all against me ; and my son,
 Banded with you, shames not to glance in words
 Against me ; which, if Simus, whom I marvel
 Tarries so long, had heard, you should go hence
 Howling, high envoys as you are. But since

I am a woman you are brave against me :
Prosper, my son, in thy unnatural league,
The gods have saved thee once, do thou beware
Their future thunder.

THE ENVOY

With a threat she is gone ;
Methinks, Orestes, you play hide and seek
With death all day in this same palace of yours.
The place looks quiet surely : there's no blood
About the columns : but it seems to me
You have but one safe subject and he's here
With his arms bound, and his allegiance lasts
No longer than his cordage.

ORESTES

Kind old man,
Thou friendly foeman, loving hater, rock
To an abandoned man, thou seest my life ;
Its very fear has grown an old stale thing
With me : I used to shudder once and tremble
If the ground cracked beneath me : in old days
I used to wake and fear some gliding hand
With a cold edge thrust thro' the tapestry—
All this is over, use is a strange thing :
And yet my very fear had more life in it
Than this inactive settled apathy.
I swear to you I have not had two moments
Real living like the instant when I felt
This man's gripe close about my throat, and I
Reeled with him : it was over but too soon.
Action is everything : then was I man,
And these boy humours fell like flakes away.
We breathe by action : O for a life of deed,
Continual deed, with this pale hair-splitter
Called thought thrust by forever.

THE ENVOY

Prince, proceed
To question out this man of sullen brows :
So shall we know whose hand has launched this bolt
So shall we find what column of thy throne

Is fretted into touchwood, and so cut out
 The length so honey-comb'd with rottenness,
 And undergird with adamant instead
 Thy seat of glory, that all men shall say
 Orestes sits as firm as any king
 In these Thessalian plains between Olympus
 And the rough Malian bending of the sea.

ORESTES

Speak, thou lean wolf, if thou canst find some voice
 Between those tufts of tawny beard ; declare
 Whose gold has made thy hand itch for my blood ?
 What is it to thee who fills Larissa's throne ?
 Would it put one more crust between thy teeth
 This change of kings ? shall such a mud-fish feel
 The ripple of storm upon the upper sea
 When the high cedar falters ? Hate is none
 Between us ; thee I never can have injured,
 Or that dead other dog in the ravine
 With the flood churning round his sallow face
 And strained persistent eyes—I never stole
 Thy loaf, thy child, thy flesh-pot on feast days,
 I never beat the thatch of thy hut in,
 Or haled thee from thy sleep into the rain—
 It cannot be my fate should have crossed thine,
 With thy blind animal yearnings, with no light
 Born in thine eyes at nature's holy ways,
 Waking to feed and sleep and hate and fear ;
 I can have no community with thee,
 That walk in all soft places, and live sweet,
 That pasture delicate thoughts, and airy dreams
 Of weeding out the man into the god—
 While the gods laugh at all my posturing,
 And hold me much as thee for all my pride,
 Who cannot call my life an hour my own,
 And feel fierce joy, as brutish as thy joys,
 In grappling with a dog like thee for life.

THE ENVOY

Thou hast heard the prince ; know, there are bitter
 ways
 To make dumb dogs find voices : spare thyself
 The worst of these and speak, who set thee on ?

THE SOLDIER

I will speak nothing : if I told his name
He would destroy me in some subtle way :
Tell or tell nothing, plainly I must die,
Therefore I'll keep my bargain and die dumb.

THE ENVOY

This knave is very resolute, my lord,
So are they all at first : I know their ways :
After a little will those stubborn lips
Unseal their secrets easily enough.
Lead him with us, keep up a stout heart, knave,
You'll need Ixion's fibres presently.

ORESTES

Nay, he will speak without it, I see well ;
He has not done me enough wrong for that :
I am most milky-minded in this thing,
Why should I crack this poor dog's joints because
He has done some master's bidding, and brought steel
Against a throat so useless as my own ?

THE ENVOY

Come now, my lord, we'll reason more on this ;
The fear perchance without the thing will work,
So he believe this torture shall be done.

DYSERIS—SIMUS

DYSERIS

Ah, Simus, thou hast tarried long, my love,
Where hast thou loitered in this perilous hour,
And left the rough words of this boy to me
With the old wolfish envoy at his back ?
Oh, they have spoken much, but that's all done,
And ended now, you are here again my strength,
My light, confirm me with thy strong great hand ;
Now can I set my breast into the storm
And laugh to hear it whistle round my hair ;

And push among it merrily. But you know
 This son assumes his power, edges us off,
 Strides and gives orders like a man, because
 He has baulked a half-fed robber—and indeed
 There was but little danger, I believe,
 Was there, my Simus? And the whole mad town
 Has run up garlands for the joy of this,
 And spread his feet with flowers ; and he indeed
 Tasting the first blood of his rule so sweet,
 And feeling the sit of the diadem in his hair,
 Straightway goes mad in arrogance, and bids me—
 Loftily bids me go to the women's rooms,
 My woman's place, since he, forsooth, would commune
 On state affairs : and that old fox of Crannon,
 Whetting his humour, told him he did well,
 And looked a king already with the trick
 Of ruling ready made ; and so the two
 Shouldered me off—and you, what peevish fortune
 Kept you away? You chose your leisure ill :
 I could have cursed you, love, that you came not—
 Conceive this thing, curse *you* ; oh, I was mad,
 They made me so : fancy, to speak them smooth,
 And look so very meek, I boiling here :
 But we will right this soon, now, in an hour :
 What is that murmur round the outer gate ?
 I am a fool to fright at the least noise :
 Oh, I will pay these insults that have made me
 Into weak stuff of woman like the rest :
 What are these murmurs, Simus ?

SIMUS

O my queen,
 There once was spoken a weak little word
 Between us, perhaps a mockery like the rest,
 Perhaps a strong chain to bind us heart to heart ;
 Ay, and make lip give joy to lip forever,
 And this next hour shall prove this either way.
 And what you said was simply this, you loved me.
 Now hear me to the ending and speak not :
 God makes our life-threads hang on certain hours :
 God makes one puny hour give shape and colour
 To all things after while we taste sweet light.
 God has done this to many, and with a flash
 He takes this hour, this "now" we are breathing out,
 And thrusts it on us saying, "Lo, my time,

My strong great time, choose ye ; are not its wings
 Swift as the moving of the light to go,
 Strong as the hand of tempest to destroy ?”
 This is my hour, act or give death his way :
 Think if you love me now ; put all else by :
 Those are my soldiers’ voices at the gate.
 I have given them wine and crammed their hands with
 gold
 And torn it by the rivets from God’s shrine.
 Until to-morrow this thing no man knows,
 Eudicus sees to that ; and by to-morrow
 We shall be all or nothing, crowned or dust :
 These soldiers are mine wholly and not nice
 In this their present humour to split straws
 Over the thing I bid them do : now say
 Slowly once over “ I love thee.”

DYSERIS

“ I love thee.”

SIMUS

Now hearken : it was I, this man you love,
 Who hired the dagger at Orestes’ throat.
 Because I would have spared you knowledge of this,
 And this boy scorned—

DYSERIS

I hate and love you, Simus,—

SIMUS

Scorned you because you love me, and waited only,
 Being a coward as he is, and prone
 To shrink on the edge of action, to serve me
 As I tried him ; and pack you to a corner
 With wool enough to spin, not worth a halter.
 Lo, I have failed to-day but fail not twice.
 This boy must die or he kills me—now choose—
 Save me, you rule as you have ruled all-queen,
 Spare him and rule one distaff and much wool :
 Say over again this word, “ I love thee, Simus.”

DYSERIS

I love—nay, in God's name I love thee not ;
 I, even I, will stab thee in God's sight ;
 To bind me with thy bestial love, all-daring,
 To set my cheek in such a mire of crime,
 Because I kissed your hateful awful eyes—
 Ah, my son, scorn me, scorn is my true meed.
 Thou hast become another thing from when
 I set thine inarticulate lips upon
 My breast's pollution—Thou art grown to hate,
 Ay, and I too have hated thee at times.
 Yet when I heard thy murmur in the night,
 Thy helpless wail, and shook me from my sleep ;
 And folded thee in warm and yearning arms,
 And felt thy life go through me, as little lips
 Took mine to make them strong ; and on my soul
 The sacredness of motherhood all night
 Lay like a mighty dawn, that cannot break
 The cloud that will not let its sweet light go—
 Call in the guards—I will fear nothing now,
 We will see at whose finger these drunk hounds
 Learn murder soonest—I can promise gold
 As well as thee, and thine is given and done—
 Call in the guards, and thine own dogs shall tear thee,
 Drunk with the gold thou stolest them to drink.
 And I will bid God speed them, with no tear,
 And afterwards go kneel before my son
 And say "resume thy throne, I only sinned."

SIMUS

What, are you gone girl-hearted like the rest,
 My once great queen? Who in an old gone day
 Kissed me and made about me her much love,
 Because that certain faces near her throne
 She would have silenced. Well, were these men found
 After a week? Did I turn tender and say,
 This man has been my brother in old wars,
 Has brought me water wounded, lain at night
 Beside the watch-fires with me? Nay, he went
 With the others to his slumber, pleasing not
 Certain sweet cruel lips that drew me on,
 To dare all shameful things that they could dare,
 And they dared much, for all their rosy meekness ;
 Yet tho' you brain me presently in this hour

By my own drunk guards' axes, and Zeus then
 Bind me in anger to Ixion's wheel ;
 I say it was worth while, it was worth while—
 To find you waiting for me afterwards,
 After, say, any worst thing man can dare,
 Waiting for me, alone in your bright robes
 And with one great fierce kiss—

DYSERIS

Ah, spare me, Simus,
 I have spoken ill, I love you, always love you,
 Banish this boy, but slay him not ; and kiss me
 Once, twice, to know myself forgiven for all
 I spoke and meant not, nay—

SIMUS

Why so it is.
 We must have in the guards, blare out to the streets :
 Nay, you and I will play this passion thro'
 Without the staring eyes you so desire.
 You are a woman after all : I thought you
 A little better than the milky rest
 Of soft fool-faces, breeders of fool's breed ;
 But like the rest you are gone flaring out
 About your mother feelings. You must act
 Even to me who know you to the core ;
 You are a woman after all : you want
 To rule and be soft-hearted, eat the fruit
 Of cruelty, wth virgin credit still
 Of being tender : I must find the crime,
 And you sit flushing in your rose leaves there
 And cry "alas" at death.

DYSERIS

O Simus, kill me,
 Kill me, and take me on your lips before ;
 I shall not sigh or groan much dying there ;
 Or, if you spurn me for my silly words,
 Lo, I will kiss only your hand, and then
 Give your sword way : you are indeed my king,
 I love you and I love you and I love you ;
 Spare me Orestes only : O think not
 I'd have him vex thee spared : he shall go forth
 To Athens—anywhere. He shall not come
 Within the sweep of thy great sceptre-shaft.

He shall go hence to-night, with one great oath
 Not to return and vex thee, love, and I
 Shall be thy servant, and no more thy queen,
 Having said foolish words, but thou wilt keep me
 A little still of thy great love, my king.

SIMUS

Well, let him live : you can command me all :
 This is a perilous mercy, seeding death.
 How shall we take our sweet of easy hours,
 Or sit at royal banquet thunder-proof,
 Knowing this boy is roaming the void earth
 To launch his exile arrows at our brows ?
 How shall I say, "to-night we sleep at peace
 In purple," as the years increase on us,
 Tho' we new-gird our gates with mountain iron,
 While he, disprinc'd in Hellas, carries round
 His story at each idle tyrant's board
 Who hungers for our pastures ? Well, my queen,
 We'll save this serpent, and we'll play with death,
 And you shall thank me for it, when his knife
 Finds me at last, with one sweet earnest gaze
 As I slip down to silence. Come, my queen.

CHORUS

Terrible Love, unconquered, strong as death,
 Art thou an Aphrodite sprung of foam,
 That makest dalliance with the winds' light breath,
 The fresh low winds that waft thee to thy home ?
 Thou flushest when they tell thee thou art fair,
 Rosy as rosy sea in purple sunset air ;
 Thou tremblest, if a little ripple breaks
 Against thy feet in flakes.
 How art thou altered, Aphrodite, now.

Terrible Love, unvanquished, lady of days,
 When thou wast young so long ago
 All pain could make thee woe,
 Thou didst not dare, O Love, on death to gaze.
 Ah, thou wert maiden then and very pure,
 And merciful indeed and soft and still,
 Thy sweet tears came for all that men endure,
 Thou wert so pitiful, and meek of will,
 And prone to sighing much and many a vow :
 Thou wert so innocent a breath could fray thee,

Thou wert so gentle a rough word could slay thee,
The soft light in thine eyes is altered now,
And a fierce splendour beams upon thy brow.
Who is this stern and radiant queen of fear,
This strong god men adore, this power the nations
hear?

This is that Aphrodite fully grown,
The trembling child upon whose eyelids lay
The tender mist of pity like a ray :
Behold the Queen of nations eager-eyed ;
Her cheeks flame and her heavy brows are set,
Her coiling beautiful hair is like a net
Intricate, laden with faint scent, and light
Changing as some cloud changes thro' the night.
Her great white arms allure, her restless lips are
wet.

Pray not, for she is cruel, and thy groan
Is as sweet incense wafted to her throne.
Men die with longing for her tender eyes,
And the cold splendid bosom, dimly seen
In some cloud region, soft as bright mist lies
Under the fading sun. Or that false queen
Shedding the splendour from her locks like rain
Walks visible the earth, and zoned with light
She moves in cruel beauty to enchain
The nations with a song, like some delight
Born in a dream but never heard again.
They madden in their sighing for her sight,
The evil Aphrodite, and they cry,
" O queen, awaken, if some realm of night,
From our desire thy radiant eyes delays,
Rise from thy slumber beautiful and white,
As a star rises from the purple haze.
Awake, arise, have sweet cane in thy hand,
Wind thee in gold and purple for a queen,
Shed out thy hairs beneath a shining band,
Let thy white fingers' glitter well be seen.
Trim thee for love and lispng feign afraid :
Long after love, but tremble like a maid
When first she hears in whispers she is fair ;
Or, queen of all delusion, come arrayed
In thy fierce beauty ; come, thou long delayed,
With thy fair sliding feet and thy faint rippled hair."
O love, but thou wast tender long ago
And we were fain to sit beside thy feet,
Listening the pretty murmurs of thy woe,

To trifle with thy hand and fingers, sweet ;
 And lay our lips on thy ripe lips may be,
 Sick with the joying only gods rejoice,
 Dazed with the perfume of thy hair, thy voice
 As when some wind folds up her song and dies ;
 The faint auroral beamings in thine eyes
 Made our eyes faint, O love, with thy desire.
 And in thy place a glory like dim fire
 Clothed thee about with mist of amber noons.
 Thou, like a tremulous bird, wouldst for reply
 Decline thy head in shining tresses deep,
 And touch thy lover's forehead, and then weep
 A tear or twain thou didst not know, love, why.
 Thou art grown older now but not more fair,
 Thou only breathest in tempestuous air,
 Thy blood abhors the calm and languid days.
 Crowding all rapture into one fierce hour,
 Dost thou sigh after thy old lover's praise
 When nations throng exulting to thy bower?
 To her let no man pray, she spares not now but
 slays,
 And scorns her maiden days, secure in baleful
 power.

Terrible love, the unsubdued, white queen,
 Is thy hand here among us? What has been
 We know, but death is dark, and what shall be
 Is veiled with silence like a sullen sea.
 One hast thou bound a queen with thy desire,
 And touched her bosom with thy hand of fire
 And breathed thy spirit deeply on her days,
 That fearless she should follow thy sweet ways ;
 So hast thou charmed her from all earthly fears
 Thee wholly she obeys, thy low voice only hears.
 Therefore, Larissa, dearest land, I moan
 Because thy fortunes are within her hand,
 By whom, ill partner of her shining throne
 One sits, an evil Atë, to command
 In her fair name the ruin of our kings ;
 But the gods hold all issues, and the wings
 Of each day bear their strong resolves, and we
 Tremble and stand aside and let them be,
 For the large years heal all things, and man's ill
 Is vapour ; but the firm gods hold their will.

ORESTES—THE ENVOY—THE SOLDIER

ORESTES

I will put by my patience with this hound :
He is ripe enough for death, and he goes straight
Dumb to the halter since this pleases him :
O envoy, summon one to bear him hence.
Yet thee, my would-be Charon to the shades,
I owe so little grudge, I'd be content
To spurn thee hence with a slave's lashes only,
If he who hired thy wretched hand to strike
Lay under my full vengeance. Is his name
Royal of those who at my board are fed?
Speak now, or never till death dumbs thy teeth :
I swear I will not ask thee any more.

THE SOLDIER

Thou wilt, I think, lose sweetness of thy life
Learning how near are those who wish thee death.

ORESTES

Thou wilt not make one hour of mine more sad
By telling me the hatred of my kin.
Love has been nothing in my way of youth,
We have not seen his face for many a day
In these accursed halls. O, I can augur,
The name you dare not speak. A certain true
And tender Simus, fearing this rough world
For one so unused to ruling as I am,
Would give me blessing of great quiet sleep
And sweet eternal foldings of the hands—
O he is good and great and very gracious
Yet I must baulk him for a little while,
And send him down to try, may be, before me,
How the dust tastes between the black dried lips.
Ah, you need not betray him, only move
Your head that I am right and question ends.

THE SOLDIER

You are right and wrong in one breath. It is Simus
And yet not Simus : a more royal hand
Would push thee hence. You'd better leave me silent.

ORESTES

Nay, by the gods, you *shall* speak now, altho'
 I kept you on the edge of death a month
 To twist and wrench your pale and foaming lips
 Into the sound of it, the hated name,
 That I must hear : lo, I, the mild weak boy,
 Toss by the pale-hued mercy that I wore
 As my life's very garment : I have wept
 To hear the sobbing of a hunted beast ;
 And I went sadly all one morning, when
 I found a field-lark dead upon her nest
 While all the heaven broke o'er her into song
 From many a poisoning wing. I shall not weep
 Much from this day : I am grown cruel now :
 Tho' I well know you are going to tell me much
 Worthy the weeping. But not any tear
 Shall be for me hereafter ; I have braced
 My soul to hear the worst thing you can say.

THE SOLDIER

Know, then, that I was sitting with my comrade
 Over our mid-day meal : comes Simus in :
 O, we had helped him once or twice before
 In this same way ; but when we heard he aimed
 So high we faltered ; tho' we feared the man,
 And knew the peril of refusing him
 Nearly as great as doing this : and he
 Seeing we knew not where to turn, brake out
 In laughter at our fear, and drew a ring
 Out from his breast—a red-gold signet ring—
 And said, " You fools, this warrant guards you sure :
 This is no paltry business of my own.
 The people king this boy but he is none.
 Ye are not blind to see on whose fair brow
 The real crown is seated, and she sends
 This token to you faithful, being a queen,
 And says, ' Go rid me of this peevish thorn.'
 And know, ye fools, to disobey is death :
 Queens are not wont to ask at all in vain."
 Behold, my lord, your—that is, the queen's ring.

ORESTES

O kind old envoy, lead this soldier out.
 Let him go free : for me I cannot speak
 Just at this instant. He has done no wrong—

That is as some wrongs are. Leave me, old man ;
I have had this black cloud over me all life :
It has burst now and stunned me : that is all :
Forbear me for a little, kind old man.

ORESTES

ORESTES

And see the mother of the nest brings in
Food to her young under the cornice there,
And little wings are fluttering as she comes
And the beaks meet, and the young swallows cry
In joy and love, and cluster to her breast.
Doth her heart lie and would she dash them down
Helpless, half-fledged upon the flags below ?
O world of death, O God's sweet lying show
Of lovely things unlovely underneath,
Brimming with poison and sick lees of Hell,
With a fair skin set over them. O Earth,
Why should thy dew of morning cheat the flower
To open in such joy its small fresh bud,
While thou the while preparest a night-blast
To snap it half expanded ? Let it be—
Let it be clay—it asked no life of thee :
Thou only madest it so fair to reap
The greater joy in tainting it with death :
O thou sick time, and horrible strong wheels
Of moving destiny, a helpless life
I break myself against you, and cry out,
And the cry reaches the ambrosial gates,
Nor is there any answer : Mother, mother,—
The word is gone awry, it breaks my lips—
Thou hast sealed up the fountains of pure love
Forever : thou hast filled their waves with blood,
And set a snake to guard them. O, arise,
Take thou thy fill of scornful joy, make bright
The blade ; in cradle yonder thy babe sleeps ;
There shall be little trembling of the hand ;
Strike deep, and smile not overmuch the while,
Lest thy smile weaken thy sure deadly hand,
And thy heart all mirth-shaken with the deed
Weaken thy aim like mercy ; and this done
Float out in royal beauty with a song
Of love between thy lips. O mother, mother,
The sweet earth cannot be the lie of love

That you would make it. Take your full desire :
 I will begone from these accursed halls,
 And vex you with my weakness never more.
 Taste thou the vintage of thy glory sweet.
 Be thine an ample and a royal day,
 Full of rewards, and dignified with pride
 Of stately rule : I will go forth alone ;
 This Atè is a very watchful fiend,
 And I will think I only feel her hand
 And not thy guilt, my mother. And I know
 That I shall not go forth wholly alone,
 There is one sweet soul loves me of them all,
 I do believe she loves me ; I am fallen
 Not much that she should change her fair faith now ;
 For when she pitied me I had no friend,
 Therefore my fortune has not ebb'd one wave,
 Being merely friendless now. If she will set
 Her patient feet to share an exile's road,
 Why, I will scorn this peevish Atè's blows :
 If this hope also cracks—why then, tired limbs
 Must pack to bed, as night grows cold in the west—
 I have loved much, and learnt that loving means
 To comprehend all sadness. To be great,
 Is only great capacity to taste
 The illimitable evils of the earth ;
 Which, if a man be but a little wise,
 The gods assign him envying his repose.
 But they allow the fool to feed and sleep
 Disdaining much to trouble his swine's rest—
 Behold ye how my morning floats this way :
 Now, thou good demon of my soul, behold
 My life is in the scale of this maid's hands,
 Weigh down with unseen aid the side of hope.

ARCHEDICE—ORESTES

ARCHEDICE

O my good lord, I hail you safe with tears
 Of my poor love : we have so much to tell you,
 Medius and I, but that will keep : your chance
 Is only worthy to be dwelt on now.
 O, how my father's eyes brake out with joy,
 When the great news fell on the city's calm
 And furrowed up its silence. O, I knew
 That round a good man's life an armed fate

Keeps ward : and Medius too had caught some fear ;
And how I warned, and how you waved me off
With laughter : but these things are now a dream,
Over and ended, and the gods have trodden
The fruit of treason to a foam of blood.

ORESTES

And yet, my sweet, suppose a man should say,
"Orestes hath no triumph in this thing :
Nay, but confusion, taint, and shameful brand,
And proof of horrible hate, where love should dwell
Throned in eternal honour ;" and suppose
The tale went on declaring, that, this seen,
Orestes felt a very shame to raise
His eyes to the fair light where he was born,
A burning shame to taste his country's air :
And that, before he turned his friendless feet
To some perpetual exile all alone,
He dreaming one maid lov'd him—nay the tale
Goes on in some such fashion,—came to her,
And taking, as I take thy hands, to show
The gesture, both her sweet palms on his own,
Spoke, "I have nothing in the world but love,
And that I know not yet if it be mine.
I am an exile and no prince at all :
I am a shamed life and no hero now.
Wilt thou, my sweet, walk forth on the cold hills
This night of exile friendless with a man
Friendless, and journey with him to the end?"
Suppose the tale true, dear, and answer it,
Knowing my life is wound with thy reply.

ARCHEDICE

Tell me, Orestes, tell me in mercy at once,
You speak but this to try me ; O my lord,
You are in horrible earnest, for you weep,
And I am walking in a great black dream,
Wherein I see a half dazed girl, not me,
Surely another, standing and one weeps
Over her hands—Orestes ! O break up
And leave me, awful dream : nay do not touch me ;
I am gone mad : I know not what to say :
You were so far, so very far above me.
I dreamt not of your love, ah no, not more
Than if a god should stoop, as in old tales,

And love one in a dream : as dream it is
 To hear you speak ; in mercy, my good lord,
 Touch not my worthless lips : I have so much
 To say of bitter speech, and such small strength—
 Oh, I will tell you all, but give me time ;
 Ay me, I loved you, worshipped, honoured you,
 But not in lover's way : and since you shone
 Above the low clouds of my love, my being
 Clave unto Medius ; partly I believe
 Because he was your friend, and near the light
 Of your high presence ; and in time I came,
 To love him wholly for himself, and you
 Faded as fades the fair face of a dream
 Except for adoration. And this day,
 Only this day, I am pledged the promised wife
 Of Medius, while you, my lord, go forth
 This night in exile ; oh I ask not why.
 But know you go not friendless—he and I
 Will be your slaves ; O, we are not ungrateful,
 You know not how he loves and honours you :
 We may do something to make light your fate—

ORESTES

Nay, I am cursed, cursed, and thrice cursed again ;
 If one should put a finger on this curse
 It would entangle thee and not save me.
 There is no need for us of further speech.
 Be happy with thy husband : he is worthy,
 Ay, worthy more than I ! be very happy :
 I shall not see your children as I think,
 Nor hear their voices at their games so far.
 But tell them of Orestes at thy knee,
 How he loved thee, and honoured Medius,
 Being cursed himself, for some god, I suppose,
 Hated his house. Lo, I will lay one kiss
 Upon thy hand and looking thro' the lights
 Of thy soft eyes I whisper, the old word
 That runs before all death and change "farewell."

ORESTES

ORESTES

Now is my day well wasted : I have joy
 To see the end : I am well tired of this.
 Yet I have purpose in me ere I go.

I can reach in my hand, and stifle down
Some of the earth's confusions, and so sleep.
I do suppose all will be well some day,
And that each individual agony
Helps on the world's perfection : that this stale
And aching sorrow will in after years
Seem to the hearers of my tale no more
Than a girl's laugh : well, be it, I am weary :
Let me drink deep of night. There is no thing
Like shame down yonder—O my mother comes,—
Something I have to speak, to do may be,
And then this gracious garment of the light,
Rent once asunder, black and swift flows in
The silence.

DYSERIS—ORESTES

ORESTES

God who has cursed our house, has made no curse
Stronger to me than that I am your son.
Listen, for you shall listen : your desire
That I shall trouble you no more is known.
A mother's wish is holy, as they say,
And you best know the quality of this.
I will obey your hatred and begone.
Perchance I shall not speak unto you more ;
Therefore, altho' you love me not, I find
Some bond that you should hear me this last time.
I will not speak to one in your high place
Of natural love : it is a peasant's virtue :
The race of princes has bred out this thing.
Indeed the order of the world is strange,
Not to spare you a royal lady and great
A mild-maid's pangs in labour : strangely wrong.
But, when you have given the child to a hired breast,
After a year or twain you shall not fail
Into infirm affection, or any yearnings
That vex the market-wife should her child cry
With a cut finger. Many royal ladies
Have weeded out this feeble love so far :
Yet few I think have scaled so high in praise
As you to conquer down all weak remorse ;
Most would have faltered, women as they are,
To hire a brace of the very lees of men,
To put their knives into a troublesome son
In a lone pass.

DYSERIS

O son, I have wished thee much
Evil, but done this never.

ORESTES

Hear me end.
Few would have done this thing ; and fewer still,
When such fair scheme miscarried, would dare go,
Go with a lie of welcome on their face,
And a false mother smile about their eyes
To greet their son saved, where they would laughed
Outright to feel his blood upon the hands
Of those they sent.

DYSERIS

Orestes, horrible error
Hath clouded thee in this, I swear, let Zeus
Smite me with his blue light-bolt on the mouth,
If I gave word to these to kill my son.

ORESTES

Zeus has sat patient, hearing many lies
Sworn in his name. Shall he sit patient always ?
Lo you, this woman quibbles in Heaven's face
On such an awful question. Nay, you gave
No actual word, but Simus gave your ring.
Shall the clear eyes of Minos after death
See such a difference to absolve you here ?

DYSERIS

O son, my punishment has taken me
With iron fangs : I have done ill in all.
But in this thing believe me innocent :
Yea, though shame slay me, I will tell thee all :
I will not hide my guilt from mine own son.
The stain of murder I can only clear,
By bringing my dishonour to the day.
Well, let it be : the guilt is less tho' great :
Account me wanton, not thy slayer, son.
I love this Simus with an evil love,
And I am tangled in its shameful toils,

And use has grown a despot to the will,
And slaves me to this Simus. O, he rules
And I am nothing, and he takes my seal
To be his warrant in all deeds of blood,
And I may not gainsay it : for the man
Is terrible, and love is terrible,
And he dares all, and hates thee : O my son,
Fly while thou mayest. I have begged thy life
Hardly of him this hour ago : he holds
The army as a rider holds a steed :
The palace avenues are set even now,
With guards to keep thee in. O he has made
Them drunk with wine, and mad with stolen gold ;
Yet I will save thee, son, tho' I should die—
I have disguises in my women's rooms,
Remain and I will bring them ; and being gone
Think on me somewhat gently, if thou mayest.

ORESTES

ORESTES

Nearer the end : courage, poor heart, one deed
And I am sure of fate and lord of time :
How the sky thickens and the night runs in :
I have shed off all mean and earthly fear
And I am drowsy for the sweet strong rest.
Thou canst not follow me with thy disgrace,
My mother, nor shall any point and say,
“ Behold her son who did such deed of shame ;
The woman with the burning shameful eyes,
Who sits up there and sins on gloriously.
O, she has wept a little tear no doubt
Upon the sheet that covered her dead son ;
May-be she laid it back and bared the eyes,
And the lean tightened lips ; but in an hour,
O, she rose up and went to her great sin,
Softly and silent went, with that white face
Fresh in the very picture of her thought.”
There shall no word be said : I doubt not here
The drowsing mumbling creature of the town
Shall prate upon it thus, and rub its hands
Upon the carrion flavour of the thing,
And beckon up its peers to see, and whisper.
And I am cold and stiff and deeply laid

And she sins warmly on—nay, he must die :
 I cannot see but that this man must die.
 O, I would not go down with bloody hands
 If I could see a turning elsewhere ;
 I cannot weed the earth of all its knaves,
 Had I the sword of Perseus, and this one
 Might as well breathe and fester with the rest.
 It is a knot of serpents, coiled and crammed,
 Sucking the poison vapour of a marsh,
 That fattening them, kills else all healthy life.
 I do not dream the serpent breed shall fail
 Tho' I crush one that in his hideous coils
 Has wound my mother. But it seems to me,
 Man's effort being bounded, he can only
 Rid out his own peculiar evil, and sleep,
 Leaving the issue of the monstrous rest
 On the god's knees, then gladly fold his hands.

SIMUS—ORESTES

SIMUS

My Lord, I am very glad to see you safe.
 Is the Queen gone? I have been somewhat tardy
 In laying my best wishes at your feet
 For your escape. But soldier-business kept me.
 They are carousing on it all to-night ;
 And I went round to see that all was quiet ;
 You understand, hot spirits, but good fellows
 In the main, as rough and blunt as I myself,
 Who can but say, "I am glad," and not fringe on it
 Fine words of compliment. Where is the Queen?

ORESTES

She will be here anon, my good lord, Simus.
 Thanks for your gladness first, for your care next.
 Be not impatient for the Queen, she comes
 Upon this instant. I entreat you, see,
 In this same scramble on the rocks, you know,
 Which I make light of, being no escape,
 A poor thief merely wanting my gold pieces,
 Not worth much boasting over at the best,
 I found a seal upon the dead man's finger—
 A quaint one 'tis : like you the fashion on't?

Approach, you see not the device so far :
 It is a fair small Eros, and he waves
 His puny arrow with his bare weak arm
 Straight from the shoulder out, a baby wrath,
 With something of this motion.

SIMUS

I am slain.

I hate thee, hate—death chokes me—how I hate
 And hated thee. I was a poor blind fool
 To seek to kill thee by another, when—

ORESTES

So ends a mighty knave ; he is dead enough.
 True little blade you flew your errand well,
 Lurking so gently silent in my sleeve.
 You bit as cleanly as this Eros dart
 Thro' his false flesh, a soft quick adder's sting,
 A bitter Eros, due to lust and hate.
 And so being ended out I will put by
 All thought of such a worm. And I will cleanse
 His blood's pollution from this pure blue steel,
 That hath a nobler haven presently.

DYSERIS—ORESTES

DYSERIS

O love, love, love ; I am too late, too late.
 Here on your corse I wildly fling me down
 With all my weight of shames ; come treble shame
 To me if it would bring you any life.
 You are a bitter son to kill my love,
 And I will curse you all my days of time :
 And mumble still the curse when I grow old ;
 Silly and old, I'll yet have wit to hate ;
 And when they lay me in my chamber-tomb
 I will have wound about my forehead there,
 This curse in blood-red letters next my brain
 Till we fall dust together. O love, love,
 Move me so little of your lips again,
 Save me the smallest corner of a smile ;
 You were so brave, you could not die so soon,
 Beneath the boy's arm you have ruled so long :

Whose life you gave me even now : No, no,
 You do but try me, and try him ; again
 Command us, he is sorry to have lifted
 His arm ; you are dazed only : lo, I loosen
 Back on the chest your royal robe, you'll breathe
 When you have room and air about the throat—
 O ye great gods curse me this boy, he's dead,
 Here went the knife, and water-like it goes
 Horribly red and blinds my dim hot eyes.

CHORUS

Roll thou sea on the crags of Pelion,
 Blow bitter wave and arise mighty gale.

DYSERIS

Ay me, the god vexes my brain with fire.

CHORUS

Breathe on the leaves all thy death full East wind,
 Rock the old desolate branches and sway.

DYSERIS

My love is dead, is dead, mark me, I say
 Dead, for behold it is a little word,
 A little and a strong small cruel word,
 Yet still as it is I'd tear the sun
 From heaven to make it false this one small word,
 And feel again his warm kiss on my mouth.

CHORUS

There is no singing in thy wake, lord Death,
 Nor voice of boys or lisp of singing girls.
 Cry, for we stumble in a grievous land.

DYSERIS

Fools, will ye thrust your griefs against mine own ?

CHORUS

Shed out our wail like blood beside the queen's.

DYSERIS

Go to, ye vain ones, I am queen in this
Being unqueened in all, that no man may
Surpass my desolation : no man dare
Push up his puny grief against my face
And vaunt and plume himself how big it is ;
Since all my nature is one grief, and I
Utterly, wholly, vanquished and absorbed,
Only exist as parcel of my pain,
Only am dull and dim and sick and blind,
Only reach out these cold blind hands upon him.

CHORUS

Die, for the dead scorn pain. Make thine their sleep.
Arise and go and heal thee, fair and great,
Better is death and far less terrible.
Descend, O queen, to silence.

DYSERIS

Listen, I loved this man, and had delight
To hear his voice. No queen in any land
Had fairer joy in loving. Beautiful
Light was upon his brow, and golden fire
Between his lips that kissed me. More and more
The shadow of his spirit made me strong,
And underneath the glory of his eyes,
I moved to music—This was yesterday,
Now—Zeus is dead and heaven rots under him.

CHORUS

Ay, for the earth is over-thrown with fear
And the blind gods sit whispering at the change.
They crowd together, feeling at the dark.
And the white Aphrodite shrieks, and sheds
The glory of her robes ; and to the dust
Lays her ambrosial bosom. And the sun
Rolls out a fearful light and the stars crack,
For Zeus is dead and all his new gods quail.

ORESTES

Know, mother, I have been most merciful
 Tho' I bear bloody semblance in this act.
 The bond thou couldst not break for thy weak self,
 Lo, I have broken and thy shame is dead.
 O rise and leave this shameful thing to lie ;
 Thou dost forget thy queendom : O rise now
 And leave thy tainted life in this man's grave,
 And be hereafter pure and humbler thou.
 O, I the son, thou cursed'st, pity thee,
 And love thee, more than ever in thy pride
 I loved thee, broken now and on the ground
 Sobbing I find of mother more in thee.
 Weep, cry, weep much : if thou canst weep so soon
 After a little thou shalt dry thy tears.
 Regret of false love is not long regret.
 Let this strange horror make thee pure and clean,
 And wean thy memory from this dead false hound
 Who shamed thee and who perished.

ORESTES—ARCHEDICE—THE ENVOY—MEDIUS

—LARISSÆANS

ORESTES

She is gone
 Weeping away. O, ye who from the gates
 Stream in, strange frightened faces and wild eyes,
 I, I, your king, Orestes did this deed ;
 Let no man stir : he dies the first of you
 That moves an angry finger. Why, ye knaves,
 Who was your king, this traitor slain or I ?
 Now ye go muttering back : must I be mild,
 May not a king defend his throat, as ye
 Save your lean bones and nurse your trivial lives ?
 Who hired the knives against me in the hills ?
 This Simus and I slew him ; ask the envoy.

LARISSÆANS

Live, live, Orestes, live our king Orestes.

ORESTES

Now are ye children for my sceptre meet.
Ye shall know all hereafter, now begone.
Some two bear out this carrion.

ORESTES—ARCHEDICE—MEDIUS—THE ENVOY

ORESTES

Kind old man,
Envoy of Crannon, thee I thank that now
I stand hard by conclusion. With thine aid
I have unravelled all and punished much.
Therefore I deeply thank thee with full heart
Touching thy hand, hail honoured in thine years.
Bear thou my greeting to the lords of Crannon,
Tell them Orestes did not shame their blood,
Being a little brave, and somewhat noble
As the world goes, doing his poor mean best,
But a bad fate had mixed him in its toils.
Commend me to thy lords, I have a prayer
To these anon. And thou, my Medius, hail,
Approach with thy young love, and I will breathe
Blessing upon you both : lay there thy hand,
And now thy soft one, my Archedice,
To meet it thus. I breathe my soul upon you.
The god who made the love between you bud
Shall guard its full-blown glory : O, I see,
The lengthening on of all your happy years.
When I am gone my exile—as I go—
Lo I would have you rulers in my room.
Behold, O envoy, I entrust my realm
To Medius, in his stable hands I lay
The jewel staff and globe : confirm me, envoy,
Here with thy hand, that Crannon and thy lords
Preserve my sure election. They are strong
And in their shadow shall my choice prevail :
My mother she is broken from her pride,
And may not rule again : I do not think,
That she would rule again, if one should come
And say "rule thou."

And now, O strange lord, Death,
Thou floating dream so near us all our lives,
Thee we put forth our hand and often touch

And know it not. O I have never feared thee.
 Let those with many loves and specious ease,
 Tremble where no fear is. For I have gazed,
 Ay, very closely in thy terrible eyes,
 And found them tender as a mother's, more
 Tender than mine. O I have felt thy hand,
 And found it answer more than mortal love's,—
 Have thou no anger with me, O great lord,
 If loving thee so much and wearied out,
 I come uncalled, and dare invade thy realm
 Trustful of welcome yet without thy leave.

Now is the road right open to mine eyes,
 I feel a spirit, and this dull flesh breaks
 In exaltation shedding off my shame.
 Fire wavers in mine eyes and the hills flash
 In awful red around me. Sheets of light
 Spread back in heaven ; there seems a breadth of lake
 With other meres beyond it infinite,
 Where strange successions of immortal lights
 Are crisped upon them. Now are my limbs air,
 And to the great change I step proudly down
 Without one sigh, without one fear—my dagger,
 Speak thou the rest.

THE ENVOY

He falls, and, lo, he falls
 Too surely stricken by his own sure hand.
 O house, O royal and accursed halls
 Fertile in curses, this thy crowning woe
 Is stricken home.

ARCHEDICE

O gentle, brave, and dear,
 Linger a little with us, while my voice
 Can reach you. Once you told me in old jest—
 You had scratched your hand and I had wrapt my hair
 About it, children both—that it could cure you :
 And lo this noble life-blood staunches not :
 I would bind up the gash with my poor hair,
 And it reds all its yellow : and your eyes
 Are smiling very faintly, as I think
 At my most useless care : O dear Orestes,
 Linger a little. Once you said you loved me,

ORESTES

O sweet, your voice has power to hold me back,
Even at the porch of the fierce light of dreams.
It is the only thread that binds me now.
I do not think my Medius envies me
The last dear fancy of a dying man :
Lay now your lips most gently upon mine
And say, that, after Medius, you loved me
Something.

ARCHEDICE

O dear Orestes, how I loved thee.

ORESTES

And this being spoken, there is end—

MEDIUS

Flow out,
True heart, and great gods raise thee to their throne.

THE ENVOY

O lords, that stand around and have such tears,
The earth is orphaned of her noblest son.
Lo, I bend down, and with a reverent hand,
I draw his mantle over the sacred face,
And the mouth brightened by the smile he died with.
And know, ye sad Larissa's citizens,
That the gods surely loved this prince of yours,
Taking him early to his beautiful rest.
They count not mortals happy by the rule
Of earthly pleasure, else were he not blest.
Nay, but they hold him greatest, who has known
To overcome most evil, keeping white
His soul the while : and in their keen strong hands
They hold all issues, and, to their clean eyes,
Evil is good, that greatens a man's soul.

CHORUS

O royal, sleep : clothe thee with fair great rest
There is no shadow on thy face of pain.
Sleep and forget the toil and stain of time,
O youthful and unblest.

A HYMN TO ASTARTE

Who shall prevail environed as thou wert
 With evil, young in days?
 Who shall return with laughter if god's curse
 Set arrow on her string?
 Ah, gentle, no pollution of thine own
 Hath steeped thy brows with shade.
 We reason not with Fate, for she is great
 And over love and tears ;
 Her lord allowed her masterdom of these,
 But gave her mercy none.
 Therefore art thou descended from the light
 And wood and shower and wave,
 And made a triumph of the realm of shade,
 Where is no love nor song,
 Nay not a little love nor any smile,
 But Lethe, best of all,
 Night and farewell and darkness and old dream—
 Noblest, and thou farewell.

A HYMN TO ASTARTE

REGENT of Love and Pain,
 Before whose ageless eyes
 The nations pass as rain,
 And thou abidest, wise,
 As dewdrops in a cup
 To drink thy children up.

Parent of Change and Death,
 We know thee and are sad,—
 The scent of thy pale wreath,
 Thy lip-touch and the glad
 Sweep of thy glistening hair :
 We know thee, bitter-fair.

Empress of earth, and queen
 Of cloud : Time's early born
 Daughter, enthroned between
 Grey Sleep and emerald Morn ;
 Ruler of us who fade :
 God, of the gods obeyed !

Divine, whose eye-glance sweet
Is earth and heaven's desire :
Beneath whose pearly feet
The skies irradiate fire,
And the cold cloud-way glows
As some rain-burnished rose.

Heaven, dumb before thy face
With fear and deep amaze,
Tingles thro' all its space :
The abyss, with shuddering rays,
Breaks, as in golden tears,
Into a thousand spheres.

Dim earth disdain not, sweet,
Altho' thine equal throne
Be near Jove's council-seat,
And Heaven is all thine own.
What vale with violet crown
Will draw thee, true-love, down ?

What earthly highland poised
In cloudy mantle cold,
Where eagles have rejoiced
Among the cliffs of gold,
And rise with icy wings
In the mountain glistenings—

What foreland fledged with myrrh,
Vocal with myriad bees,
What pine-sequestered spur,
What lone declivities,
Will draw thee to descend,
Creation's cradle-friend ?

The sun feeds at thy smiles,
The wan moon glows thereby.
The dædal ocean isles
Terraced in rosemary,
The brushwood in the bed
Of the dry torrent head,

A HYMN TO ASTARTE

The rolling river brink
With plummy sedges grey,
The ford where foxes drink,
The creek where otters play—
Yearn upwards—all of them—
To grasp thy raiment's hem.

They know thee, when the gloom
Breaks and the mild winds blow :
And orchards dare to bloom
Amid the unmelted snow.
When philomel begins
Among the moorland whins.

Thine is that dubious day
Of rathe and poignant spring :
And thine the crimson sway
Of summer crowned a king.
And in the time of wheat
We know thee, paraclete !

Mother of comfort, come !
The harvest axles shine,
The grain is gathered home :
The hills are full of wine.
The vats are red with lees,
And red the vine-girls' knees.

We feel thee dim and great,
We partly seem to know
A forehead calm as fate,
O'er eyelids wet with woe.
Limbs like the gleam of day,
Breasts as the buds of May.

Ascend—the road is long,
The cloud-line burns between ;
As to the moon our song
Climbs to thee, silver queen,
In thy dove-guided car
Urania ! crescent star !

Let the dry field and bower
As sweet rain drink thee up.
Let every flagging flower
Extend its shining cup.
Let every shaggy bee
Draw hydromel of thee.

As in the March day wan,
By seas that greyly swell,
The nightingale comes on
Singing from rock to dell,
And all the wood-way thrills
In new-born daffodils—

Those citadels of air
Thy holy coming moves :
As when the dove's despair
Sighs in ambrosial groves.
And we, who hear, rejoice
As at our first love's voice.

Fain would we see thy face,
Mother of many dreams :
Fain would our hands embrace
Thy raiment as it streams.
Thou floatest like a prayer
With incense in thy hair.

Ah, could a mortal gaze
In thy mysterious eyes ;
And, thro' their mirrored maze
And treasured secrecies,
See rising like a star
The soul he wants afar !

We change as frost or foam :
We go away to graves.
Due to a dusty home,
We are born as buds or leaves.
The canker some, the fall
Will gather groundward all.

A HYMN TO ASTARTE

Mother of mysteries,
Beside thine altar stone
Watching for auguries
After the victim's moan :
While at thy feet are laid
Garland and lamb and blade.

I have seen thy silver fane
And trod thy slippery stair,
Red with a crimson rain
And foot-worn with despair.
Pale as dead men, ah, sweet,
We kneel to kiss thy feet.

We have leave one little hour
In thy white house to doze :
Broad passion-flowers embower
The portals amber-rose,
And lotus lilies keep
Guard at thy shrine of sleep.

As drowsy flies which bide
In some grey spider's snare ;
Sleep-locked yet open-eyed,
Glad yet in half despair,
Lovers and maidens sit
In the yellow gates of it.

Hand interpressed with hand,
And kiss on kiss repaid,
And vows in accents bland
By lips delicious made—
Tho' these as gods embrace,
Shall they of Death have grace ?

Soon must endearment cease :
And ye, who sucked, sublime,
Grapes of Arcadian peace,
Secure of change and time—
Who made each purple hill
A throne to love your fill :

Who made each vale-head sweet
Where crumpled oxlip grows :
Who set down silken feet
In hyacinth and rose—
All these one scytheman's edge
Shall shear as meadow sedge !

In vain ye crown Life's brim
With perfumed leaves of vine,
Whose tinted tendrils swim
Among its foam divine—
Drink softly, lest ye wake
In the red lees a snake.

There comes a night, wherein
All cups will empty stand,
Whence asps of pleasant sin
Shall coil up at thy hand.
When moth and mice, as moles,
Shall drill thy robe in holes.

When thy gay feasting gear
Shall rot its every thread,
Thy diamonds seem a tear
On garlands of the dead,
Thy glory stained with rust,
Thy red gold black with dust.

Dumb in thy ruin then,
Wilt thou have heart to weep
For her, who pleased men,
And bound thee as a sheep,
Whose sides the brambles tear,
Whose back the thorns rake bare ?

And we, the great and gay,
When we are gone to ground,
Outplayed our little play,
Outsung our little round—
Earth-lords who thought ourselves,
On Lethe's dusty shelves,—

A HYMN TO ASTARTE

Must we, who raught at stars
And swathed our limbs in gold,
Laurelled in glorious wars,
Become mere grave-yard mould?
Who slew our beeves to thee,
Queen of the Cyprus sea.

Queen of the roses' wood
Where blighted lovers weep :
Queen of the cypress rood
Where bygone lovers sleep.
The quick thy slaves abide :
The dead thy servants died.

They laid their palms to sleep
Warmed in thy fostering,
They heard the giant sweep
Of thy wings winnowing :
Canst thou pay Time again
The blood of half thy slain ?

Ah, girl-mouth, burning dew
That made the violet faint,
What shall become of you,
My silver-breasted saint ?
What morning shall arise
Upon those darkened eyes ?

Thy kiss, thy grace must pass
As unremembered things,
As faded autumn grass
Forgets its fairy rings.
After the dance delight,
Rest comes and sable night.

I hear a rusty bell
Clash from a ruined tower
To those in asphodel,
Gay girls of pleasure's hour,
Who rest their golden heads,
Laughing on iris beds :

Thou hast no joy in these,
Lord Death—it seems to say—
Thy spirit hath no ease
With such poor dolls of clay.
Peal out, O bell, and sweep
These triflers to the deep !

Peal on ! the sun is low,
The heaven is blear and dumb.
Life and the noon-day go :
Curse and the mid-night come.
By this last leaden ray
Fall to your beads and pray !

Crown you with thorny fear :
Have ashes in each palm :
Let each chill chapel hear
Your penitential psalm.
The saints in wax sit round,
They make no sign or sound.

By slimy chancel floors
With adder's tongue bescaled :
By broken mill-dam doors
With stoat and raven nailed :
By moats where leaves rot deep :
By herds of limping sheep.

In places desperate,
And wintry as despair,
In thy forlorn estate
Crawl thither, speak this prayer—
As honey changed to gall,
My lust and dalliance pall.

I find no strength or stay,
Mine hour is almost done.
Queen Venus turns away
And rises towards the sun.
Her upward glory burns,
She leaves us—dust and urns !

A HYMN TO ASTARTE

O Love, more fell than Hate,
Who settest down thy torch
At grey Death's iron grate,
And Time's dismantled porch :
Once o'er the embers grey
Thou sighest ; then, away,

Impel thine orient wings
Where ether's stars are born :
Soar, as the sky-lark sings,
Scaling the crystal morn.
The groan, the grave, the cry
Affright thee—float on high !

Let Heaven receive thee now
Veiled round with rainbow glows.
Rose clusters on thy brow,
Thy breast another rose,
Whereat babe Cupid lies
Asleep with lullabies.

Rise, pressing Love to rest
Against thy shoulder pearly :
Each dewdrop of thy breast
Becomes a starry world,
And the vast breathless skies
Are strown with galaxies.

Nurse of eternity,
Thy bosom feeds the sun.
From thy maternity
All breasts in nature run,
Astarte, to thy ray,
Sick of all gods, we pray.

We shamed with priestly shames,
And scourged with princely rods,
Have heard a many names
Of ineffectual gods,
Whose rumour and whose curse
Is sound and nothing worse.

We have writhen in the mesh
Of lords and tyrants dumb,
We in whose shoulder-flesh
The brand of kings has come
To stamp us theirs by proof,
As oxen on the hoof.

We have wailed in impious rites
Their moody love to win.
We have done our body spites
And gashed our bloodless skin.
Baal and Cybele
Have worn our frequent knee.

Locked in blind heaven aloof,
The gods are grey and dead.
Worn is the old world's woof,
Weary the sun's bright head.
The sea is out of tune,
And sick the silver moon.

The May-fly lives an hour
The star a million years ;
But as a summer flower,
Or as a maiden's fears ;
They pass, and heaven is bare
As tho' they never were.

God withers in his place,
His patient angels fade :
Love, on thy sacred face,
Of tear and sunbeam made,
In our perplexity
We turn, and gazing die.

A WOODLAND GRAVE

BRING no jarring lute this way
To demean her sepulchre,
Toys of love and idle day
Vanish as we think of her.
We, who read her epitaph,
Find the world not worth a laugh.

A WOODLAND GRAVE

Light, our light, what dusty night
Numbs the golden drowsy head?
Lo ! empathed in pearls of light,
Morn resurgent from the dead :
From whose amber shoulders flow
Shroud and sheet of cloudy woe.

Woods are dreaming, and she dreams :
Through the foliated roof above
Down immeasurably streams
Splendour like an angel's love.
Till the tomb and gleaming urn
In a mist of glory burn.

Cedars there in outspread palls
Lean their rigid canopies.
Yet a lark note through them falls,
As he scales his orient skies.
That ærial song of his,
Sweet, might come from thee in bliss.

There the roses pine and weep
Strong, delicious, human tears.
There the posies o'er her sleep
Through the years—ah ! through the years,
Spring on spring renew the show
Of their frail memorial woe.

Wreaths of intertwisted yew
Lay for cypress where she lies.
Mingle perfume from the blue
Of the forest violet's eyes.
Let the squirrel sleek its fur,
And the primrose peep at her.

We have seen three winters sow
Hoar-frost on thy winding-sheet :
Snows return again, and thou
Hearest not the crisping sleet.
Winds arise and winds depart,
Yet no tempest rocks thy heart.

We have seen with fiery tongue
Thrice the infant crocus born :
Thrice its trembling curtain hung
In a chink of frozen morn.
This can rear its silken crest :
Nothing thaws her ice-bound breast.

We have eaten, we have earned
Wine of grief and bread of care,
We, who saw her first inurned
In the dust and silence there.
We have wept—ah ! God—not so :
Trivial tears dried long ago.

But we yearn and make our moan
For the step we used to know :
Gentle hand and tender tone,
Laughter in a silver flow—
All that sweetness in thy chain,
Tyrant Grave, restore again.

Bring again the maid who died :
We have withered since she went.
O unseal the shadowy side
Of her marble monument—
Earth, disclose her as she lies
Dozed with woodland lullabies.

A SIMPLE MAID

THOU hast lost thy love, poor fool,
Creep into thy bed and weep.
Loss must be a maiden's school,
Loss and love and one long sleep.
Half her time perplexed with tears
Till the dust end all her years—
All her fears.

PHAETHON

Was thy love so gracious, lass?
 Never such a love before
 In this old world came to pass,
 Nor shall be for evermore.
 Sweet and true, a king of men,
 None like him shall come again—
 Come again.

Was thy bud so precious, lass,
 Opening to a perfect rose?
 Till between the leaves, alas,
 Winter fell in flaky snows.
 Then, ah ! then, its crimson side
 Brake upon the briers and died—
 Brake and died.

FORTUNE'S WHEEL

I HAD a true-love, none so dear,
 And a friend both leal and tried.
 I had a cask of good old beer,
 And a gallant horse to ride.

A little while did Fortune smile
 On him and her and me.
 We sang along the road of life
 Like birds upon a tree.

My lady fell to shame and hell,
 And with her took my friend.
 My cask ran sour, my horse went lame,
 So alone in the cold I end.

PHAETHON

(A FRAGMENT)

PHŒBUS Apollo, Zeus and Leto's son,
 Whose throne is set in heaven : whose earthly fame
 The incense altars of a hundred fanes
 Acclaim with cymbal clash and choral song,

Of the Olympian princedom not the least :
 Whose green Pierian laurel for reward
 Crowns the dead poets, crownless till they die,
 With pale fruit ripe too late and tardy leaves :
 Patron of all whose weary craft it is
 To teach the deaf to sing, the blind to see :
 God of the healer, god of the nine wise maids :
 Helmer of that huge planet, in whose beam
 The Earth as some great rose at spring-coming
 Opens her leaves and laughs—This orient lord,
 Clear as the crystal of his Hippocrene,
 In old-world meadows asphodelian once
 Found Clymene, the gracious, the amazed,
 A trembling snow-drop of the silver foam,
 Belated in those amber meads, whereon
 She came to gather tulips, unattended ;
 Because her sister Oceanides
 Held their sea-flowers the best, and her grey sire
 Hated the earth. Old King Oceanus,
 Blue-eyed, and wrinkled as the sand is wrinkled,
 A fair wide face, hoary and ample-browed,
 Smiling a sort of helpless animal smile,
 And whispering in the tangles of its beard
 Of intervolving sea weeds : a vague bulk
 Of humid godship, whom the fisher-folk
 See floating, like the limpet-cruled oar
 Of some old Argosy wrecked long ago.

Whose child Apollo met among the flowers,
 And fell, ah, well-a-day, enamouring
 With such white heat and storm of love desire
 That he must win her, lest the god in him
 Should pine into some spectre like a cloud,
 Or dwindle to a phantom of himself
 Waving its frustrate wings too weak for heaven,
 Through the intensities of longing starved
 Into a thing of air, its essence gone,
 A waif upon the winds, rocked in the rain ;
 Forlorn, dishevelled, unimmortalised,
 Its crown unworn, its empty throne forsaken !
 Can Love do this ? he has done this in Heaven.
 Who shall contend with Love ? Not Phœbus then ;
 God as he was he paid obedience sweet,
 And the adored in adoration knelt
 To Clymene, chosen of Love for him.
 And day by day with burning lips he came,

Pining he came in those ambrosial meads
 To woo her. Morn by morn, he made her songs
 To win her fancy—things all dew and flame,
 Winged with the blush of sunset and gold of dawn,
 Flame music to the dew of earnest words.
 As when the spring sweeps out in wild desire
 Weeping and panting o'er the unmelted snow,
 And the red orchards blossom all too soon :
 Ice at the root and rose leaves on the bough,
 The world blood fighting with the frozen grave,
 And Love flies over the blue fields of ice
 With laughter and with perfume. From whose wings
 The rain-drops in immeasurable gold
 Sheet the cold, aching winter under him ;
 And all the birds begin—ah, God, what bard,
 Piecing his petty syllables aline,
 Dare croak where Phœbus sings, dare lift his voice
 To catch a shadow of the song of heaven,
 Dare in the weakling words at his command
 To give the passion of a god, and pour
 Immortal wine into an urn of clay,
 Or light his lantern at the bolt of Jove ?
 Ah, fool ! fling down thy lyre ; what bard shall live
 When Love makes poet of the poet King ?
 Lay down thy lyre and watch. And if so be
 Some inkling reach thee of Olympian tones,
 Be thankful in thy sorrow and very glad,
 Albeit thou shalt never render them
 Again unto thy fellows, for thy hand
 Is weak as palsy and thy mouth a babe's.

So Phœbus sang to sweetheart Clymene ;
 And at the wonder of his lovelorn chords
 The nightingales were silenced and ashamed
 And knew their master, dumb, nor sang again
 That spring-time. And the glamour of his song
 Tinged the doubting wood-tips into bloom.
 And she, yet virgin of all lovers, heard
 The enchantment. On her face his fragrant breath
 Came, in her ears that miracle of music,
 Wonder of sound whereat her spirit died
 Fainting. His eyes burnt on her quailing lids,
 Burning around her his immortal hands !
 What marvel that she gave him his desire,
 Bride in the daffodils, weepingly gave
 Herself to the fierce Sun, bedewed with tears—

As one of these poor amber blossoms flags
Moist with the morning's drops, as Phœbus beats
His sudden-risen rays all merciless
Against her petal curtains, flame in flame.

Some gods kiss once and never come again :
Not Phœbus thus. No nymph of dale or down,
No silver Naiad of the sedge, no pale
Oread with acorn garland, not his old
Daphne, ere she unwomaned into leaves—
Seemed to Apollo half as beautiful
As Clymene his treasure lately found,
His long to be beloved. Her love was gold
Untarnished in the lapse of light and rain.
Her love was wine whereof a man may drink
And thirst again unwearied. Years went on,
And still Apollo, in her loveliness
Constantly joying with a spousal joy,
Left for her arms the throned queens of heaven,
Sole in the icy splendours of their thrones,
And found his sea-girl sweeter than them all,
Her yearlong husband. Fickle are the gods ;
After the brief night of their favour done,
They do arise, and with one cold farewell
Sail cloudward : and the wan white victim weeps
For aye a broken lamb, wounded and mazed
Upon the altar of their amorousness.
But the Olympian lover melts in air.
His bright ascent a leaning rainbow tracks,
Dædal with argent amethyst and tinged
In avenues of the marmoreal dawn,—
Hard-eyed, immortal, griefless, loveless, lost !
But Phœbus loved not as these godlings use ;
He needed in the garden of his soul
No lovelier roseleaf. Clymene alone
Wrote in his absent fancy pictured loves.
She rode in spirit thro' the cloud with him.
He heard her footstep in the halls of heaven,
Her smile made pale his father's starry lamps,
In heaven he hungered for his earthly spouse ;
And all the glorious precinct of his birth
Palled like a prison on his weary eyes.
And those Titanic palaces of dreams,
Golden, auroral, built for god desire
To sun itself in gardens of content ;
Where the eternal lily never fades,

And there are no graves, no vicissitudes,
 No sighs, no cypress : but the splendid groves
 Murmur with happy May beyond the stars—
 All these sweet places sickened on his soul,
 Empty of love, empty of Clymene,
 Most joyless desolations full of joy,
 Unparadised, insipid, tearless heaven.
 Then as a lark tired with the steadfast sun,
 Or solitary singing to the cloud,
 Reseeks with joy his lowly nesting tuft
 And dreams beside his mate no more of stars,
 Perfectly homed and utterly content—
 So Phœbus down the blue lake of the air
 Back to his nest of love and Clymene
 Descended. Like some meteor shining mild
 In autumn skies, when shadowy reapers set
 Their upward sheaves against the harvest moon,
 Slides down the milky arc of spangled heaven
 And seems to meet the ground a mile away—
 So to his earthly hymeneals sank
 The great sun-god. Love quenched his fiercer beams,
 Love softened all his burning lineaments,
 And made the ardours of that visage mild,
 Whereon the eagle sole of mortal sights
 Can rest his aching orbs. A rosy veil
 Robe-like o'ershadowed his effulgent form,
 Disguising in his aspect half the god,
 Ungreatening all this sunny emperor
 Into the beauty of some warrior king,
 Chosen of men, heroic flower of fame,
 Who from the tent and camp of his high deeds
 Comes to his lady's bower. So Phœbus came.

Years rolled away : the scytheman laggard Time,
 Whose slow swift feet roam on for evermore,
 Moving athwart the lights of night and morn,
 A dream between the cradle of the day
 And the dull urn of midnight, deaf to hear
 The lute of love, blind to the rose in bloom,
 The terrible, the merciful, grey Time,
 Who like a thirsty raven ever tracks
 The blood drops of the wounded western sun ;
 Beneath whose ebon wing the world grows old—
 Time in his flight came by. The stars arose,
 And the wild winds roared and again were mute,
 And leaves were born and yellowed and Time went on.

So years slipt by to Phœbus and his spouse,
And children in their bridal bowers arose.

Ah ! Phaethon, unhappy Phaethon !
How shall I tell thee next ? In what lean words
Set down for other men and other days,
When Time is old and grown unbeautiful,
And all the gods are dead or sealed away
In dusty tomes despised and clean forgot
In this cold northern corner of the world
Beyond the grey seas misty. O Arcady,
O flute of Tempe frozen these thousand years,
O sad great voice of Pan ! I see the maids
Pierian weeping round their Hippocrene.
The ploughshare of this sordid Present cleaves
And cuts the sacred well, and boorish feet
Crush in its sides. I think, that never more
Can one stoop down and drink : and rising up,
Flushed with a tingling inspiration, sing
Beyond himself, and in a huckster age
Catch some faint golden shadow into his page
From that great day of Hellas and Hellas gods ;
Which these wise critics of the city of smoke
Sneer at as wrack and lumber of the tombs.

ON A PORTRAIT OF SIR JOHN SUCKLING¹

[This is by Marshall, and is prefixed to the earlier editions of the *Fragmenta Aurea*, 1646, 1648, 1658. The poet is represented as surrounded by a great wreath of evergreens, which encircles the whole frontispiece. Above the wreath is written—*Obiit anno* (then comes a blank) *ætatis* 28.]

A HUNDRED years, my hero, thou hast lain
Rusting in earth. The world has gone its way
Careless that Death has mown thy golden youth.
Soldiers have fought and died and known not thee.
Maidens have loved, who never heard thy name.
And thou, whom Muses crowned with every gift,
While yet a boy—tho' in achievement man

¹ See a note on Sir J. Suckling at the end of the volume

And monarch—young in years yet ripe in fame,
 Art snatched away ; while this grim raven, Death,
 Feeds on the light and glory of the world.
 Heroic heart, long silent in the dust ;
 Where is the warrior's tomb, what grey church tower
 Is honoured by thy rest ? Art thou inurned
 In some dim Norfolk village, whence thy race
 Came of a kindly stock who fed their bees
 And grew their grain ? Hast thou an effigy
 Armoured in stone, with angels at the base
 In alabaster sorrow ; as the mode
 Ran of sepulchral grief ? And overhead
 Thy gauntlet and thy banner and thy helm
 Nailed to the chancel wall, and covered quite
 With cobwebs. While thy wasted banner droops
 As if the spiders wove its ragged sides.
 And this thy hatchment, azure once and gules,
 And three stags golden, emblems of thy race,
 Effaced and tarnished, half the tinctures gone.
 Oblivion and a hecatomb of dust
 Invade the silent precincts of thy rest,
 And thro' the lancet window I can hear
 The voices of the village, forge and mart,
 Harrow and spade, the mill-wheel and the plough.
 While in the coppice sole, one nightingale
 Sings me reminders of a note as sweet
 And tender as her own ; and while she sings
 Thou art not quite forgot, my soldier bard,
 Here in the pastoral village of thy youth.

Tender and great, true poet, dauntless heart,
 We cannot see with eyes as clear as thine.
 A sordid time dwarfs down the race of men.
 They may not touch the lute or draw the sword
 As thou didst, half immortal. So we hang
 A wreath of homage on our captain's urn.

Farewell, to other scenes we must begone.
 The elms are shining in the sun : the roofs
 Melt with the mighty rain. The uprolled cloud
 Soars in its majesty away through heaven.
 The morning breaks in red and lustre. Earth
 Is glad because of her. But we bewail
 The young glad light of our Apollo gone,
 Thy laurel, and thy lyre with broken chords,
 And snapt below the hilt, thy gallant sword.

Where is the winsome lady whom he met
In that old spring among the old-world flowers?
Where are her fairy footsteps, where are gone
Aglaura's graceful curls? The tender rose
That lay against her cavalier's soft kiss :
The lordly, the invincible, the king
Of every Muse. Surely, that giant wreath,
Stamped on the opening page of thy renown,
Made out of all the woods, that leaf shedding
Of rathe Castalia's orchards, that green round
Shall wrap thee in with honour, dear and dead,
True gentleman, great type of ages gone,
To shallow natures in the days of smoke :
Radiant Apollo, warrior, Englishman,
To whom the cannon calling or the lute
Came with an equal voice : colleague of gods,
Such as the puny mothers of the world
No longer nourish on degenerate breasts,
The giants of the dawn, that never more
Shall come again. Old England, hear me say,
This man has lain in dust two hundred years,
Hast thou another such, my country, peer
To the great gone-away?

CIRCE

THIS the house of Circe, queen of charms—
A kind of beacon-cauldron poised on high,
Hooped round with ember-clasping iron bars,
Sways in her palace porch, and smoulderingly
Drips out in blots of fire and ruddy stars ;
But out behind that trembling furnace air,
The lands are ripe and fair,
Hush are the hills and quiet to the eye.
The river's reach goes by
With lamb and holy tower and squares of corn,
And shelving interspace
Of holly bush and thorn,
And hamlets happy in an Alpine morn,
And deep-bowered lanes with grace
Of woodbine newly born.

But inward o'er the hearth a torch-head stands
Inverted, slow green flames of fulvous hue,
Echoed in wave-like shadows over her.
A censer's swing-chain set in her fair hands
Dances up wreaths of intertwined blue
In clouds of fragrant frankincense and myrrh.
A giant tulip head and two pale leaves
Grew in the midmost of her chamber there,
A flaunting bloom, naked and undivine,
Rigid and bare,
Gaunt as a tawny bond-girl born to shame,
With freckled cheeks and splotched side serpentine,
A gipsy among flowers,
Unmeet for bed or bowers,
Virginal where pure-handed damsels sleep :
Let it not breathe a common air with them,
Lest when the night is deep,
And all things have their quiet in the moon,
Some birth of poison from its leaning stem
Waft in between their slumber-parted lips,
And they cry out or swoon,
Deeming some vampire sips,
Where riper Love may come for nectar boon !

And near this tulip, reared across a loom,
Hung a fair web of tapestry half done,
Crowding with folds and fancies half the room :
Men eyed as gods and damsels still as stone,
Pressing their brows alone,
In amethystine robes,
Or reaching at the polished orchard globes,
Or rubbing parted love-lips on their rind,
While the wind
Sows with sere apple leaves their breast and hair.
And all the margin there
Was arabesqued and bordered intricate
With hairy spider things
That catch and clamber,
And salamander in his dripping cave
Satanic ebon-amber ;
Blind worm, and asp, and eft of cumbrous gait,
And toads who love rank grasses near a grave,
And the great goblin moth, who bears
Between his wings the ruined eyes of death ;
And the enamelled sails
Of butterflies, who watch the morning's breath.

And many an emerald lizard with quick ears
 Asleep in rocky dales.
 And for an outer fringe embroidered small,
 A ring of many locusts, horny-coated,
 A round of chirping tree-frogs merry-throated,
 And sly, fat fishes sailing, watching all.

A SONG OF FAITH FORSWORN

TAKE back your suit.
 It came when I was weary and distraught
 With hunger. Could I guess the fruit you brought?
 I ate in mere desire of any food,
 Nibbled its edge and nowhere found it good.
 Take back your suit.

Take back your love,
 It is a bird poached from my neighbour's wood :
 Its wings are wet with tears, its beak with blood.
 'Tis a strange fowl with feathers like a crow :
 Death's raven, it may be, for all we know.
 Take back your love.

Take back your gifts.
 False is the hand that gave them ; and the mind
 That planned them, as a hawk spread in the wind
 To poise and snatch the trembling mouse below.
 To ruin where it dares—and then to go.
 Take back your gifts.

Take back your vows.
 Elsewhere you trimmed and taught these lamps to burn ;
 You bring them stale and dim to serve my turn.
 You lit those candles in another shrine,
 Guttered and cold you offer them on mine.
 Take back your vows.

Take back your words.
 What is your love? Leaves on a woodland plain,
 Where some are running and where some remain :
 What is your faith? Straws on a mountain height,
 Dancing like demons on Walpurgis night.
 Take back your words.

Take back your lies.
 Have them again : they wore a rainbow face,
 Hollow with sin and leprous with disgrace ;
 Their tongue was like a mellow turret bell
 To toll hearts burning into wide-lipped hell.
 Take back your lies.

Take back your kiss.
 Shall I be meek, and lend my lips again
 To let this adder daub them with his stain ?
 Shall I turn cheek to answer, when I hate ?
 You kiss like Judas in the garden gate !
 Take back your kiss.

Take back delight,
 A paper boat launched on a heaving pool
 To please a child, and folded by a fool ;
 The wild elms roared : it sailed—a yard or more.
 Out went our ship but never came to shore.
 Take back delight.

Take back your wreath.
 Has it done service on a fairer brow ?
 Fresh, was it folded round her bosom snow ?
 Her cast-off weed my breast will never wear :
 Your word is "love me." My reply "despair !"
 Take back your wreath.

THE STUDY OF A SPIDER

FROM holy flower to holy flower
 Thou weavest thine unhallowed bower.
 The harmless dewdrops, beaded thin,
 Ripple along thy ropes of sin.
 Thy house a grave, a gulf thy throne
 Affright the ~~fairies every one~~.
 Thy winding sheets are grey and fell,
 Imprisoning with nets of hell
 The lovely births that winnow by,
 Winged sisters of the rainbow sky :
 Elf-darlings, fluffy, bee-bright things,
 And owl-white moths with mealy wings,

And tiny flies, as gauzy thin
As e'er were shut electrum in.
These are thy death spoils, insect ghoul,
With their dear life thy fangs are foul.
Thou felon anchorite of pain
Who sittest in a world of slain.
Hermit, who tunest song unsweet
To heaving wing and writhing feet.
A glutton of creation's sighs,
Miser of many miseries.
Toper, whose lonely feasting chair
Sways in inhospitable air.
The board is bare, the bloated host
Drinks to himself toast after toast.
His lip requires no goblet brink,
But like a weasel must he drink.
The vintage is as old as time
And bright as sunset, pressed and prime.

Ah, venom mouth and shaggy thighs
And paunch grown sleek with sacrifice,
Thy dolphin back and shoulders round
Coarse-hairy, as some goblin hound
Whom a hag rides to sabbath on,
While shuddering stars in fear grow wan.
Thou palace priest of treachery,
Thou type of selfish lechery,
I break the toils around thy head
And from their gibbets take thy dead.

J A E L

So then their hymn of victory is done.
Thank God for that. Home are the soldiers gone.
The garlands of the triumph wither brown,
The singing-girls are sleepy, the hoarse crowd
Murmurs itself away. Night rises fast.
The shadows on the canvas of my tent
Deepen, and Jael in her lonely home
Begins to think it over, now the blare
Of clarions do not hail her longer blest.
O lying voice ! Methought, I found a crown

Of glory, silvern : out I held my hand
And drew a burnished adder off her nest,
Who stung me redly first, and, when blood dried,
In one small pit of poison deadly-blue.
The name of that ill worm is Infamy.

So the moon comes and silence in her train ;
There will not be a many stars to-night.
The wind begins his circuit with a wail.
He tastes and touches at each little peak,
And in the broken furrows like a bird
Sings, out in darkness. Why art thou so sad ?
“ O blessed among women ”—So they sang
With brazen lips to God. But he knows more
And with one great chain binds my heavy soul ;
I do not think that God will ever reach
His finger down and ease it. He hates me ;
You see, I cannot weep. Does that sound well ?
How many evil women can find tears,
Sinning all day. My one great deed of blood
Outweighs, as Horeb, in the scales of God
Against some petty sand-grains. He sees that,
Insists upon it, keeps it in his books
In plain red flaring letters that endure.
These women have a hundred petty ways
Of sinning feebly. He forgets them all.
They sin as ants or flies. He cannot praise
Or blame such creatures, simply lets them be.
I feel all this alone with my own heart.
The solitude is busy with God's voice
Speaking my sin. I am worn and wearied out ;
A mere weak woman, after all is said ;
Searching the intense dark with sleepless eyes,
Huddled away by the main-pole in the midst,
A curled crushed thing, a blurred white heap of robes,
Moaning at times with wild arms reaching out.
While on my canvas walls the rain-gush comes,
And the ropes scream and tighten in the blast.

So I must watch until my lord return ;
The camp of Israel holds to-night carouse,
And Heber sits at Barak's own right hand ;
Because I have risen against a sleeping man,
And slain him, like a woman. No man slays
After this sort. The craven deed is mine,

Hold thou its honour, Heber ; have thy wine,
Among the captains claim the noblest seat ;
And revel, if thou hast the heart, till dawn,
Brave at the board and feeble in the field !

As the sun fell this eve I felt afraid,
For in his fading, as he touched the haze,
I saw in heaven one round ripe blot of blood.
And all the gates of light, whereby he died,
Were wasted to one drop, a crimson seed ;
I turned away and made mine eyelids fast ;
But deep down in my soul I saw it still
The single reddish clot. The blood was pale ;
They say pale blood is deadlier than the red,
And pallid this one drop. I think it came
Out of his forehead underneath the nail.
I had been told that slain men bled so much,
I nerved my soul for rivers and none flowed.
Somehow, his bloodless death was awfulest.
There seemed no reason, why at one swift blow
Of my deft hands this warm flushed sleepy man
Should cease into a statue, as he did,
At one shock of the hammer on his brow.
(I heard a fable once—a trader's tale,
Who sailed from Javan's islands hawking veils—
How with a mallet one struck stone to flesh ;
He was a cunning carver, if he did ;
But I smote flesh to marble. That's no skill,
Requires a devil only.) He turned once—
Twice—with a sort of little heaving moan,
A strange sad kind of choking under-sound ;
And opened at me full great piteous eyes,
Already glazing with reproachful films ;—
As with one gasp—I fancy he gasped twice—
He lay there done with, that great goodly man ;
And in his sidelong temple, where bright curls
Made crisp and glorious margin to his brows—
So that a queen might lay her mouth at them
Nor rise again less royal for their kiss—
There, in the interspace of beard and brow,
The nail had gone tearing the silken skin ;
And, driven home to the jagged head of it,
Bit down into the tent-boards underneath ;
And riveted that face of deadly sleep ;
As some clown nails an eagle on his barn,
The noble bird slain by the ignoble hand,

So slept the lordly captain at my feet ;
 His lovely eyes were hardly troubled now ;
 Yet in his keen grey lips a certain scorn
 Dwelt as indignant, that a deed so mean,
 Treason so petty, woman-guile so poor,
 Should ever stifle out their glorious breath.
 As I leant o'er them their serene disdain
 Was eloquent against me, more than words,
 And easy was the meaning of their scorn
 To render and interpret into this—
 " Better to be as we are earth and dust
 Than to endure, as Jael shall live on,
 In self-contempt more bitter than the grave.
 Live on and pine in long remorseful years.
 Terrible tears are sequel to this deed ;
 Beat on thy breast, have ashes in thy hair,
 Still shalt thou bear about in all thy dreams
 One image, one reproach, one face, one fear.
 Live, Jael, live. We shall be well revenged."

This woman was a mother, think of that ;
 A name which carries mercy in its sound,
 A pitiful meek title one can trust ;
 She gave her babe the breast like other wives,
 In cradle laid it, had her mother heed
 To give it suck and sleep. You would suppose
 She might learn pity in its helpless face ;
 A man asleep is weaker than a child,
 And towards the weak God turns a woman's heart ;
 Hers being none. She is ambitious, hard,
 Vain, would become heroic ; to nurse babes
 And sit at home, why, any common girl
 Is good enough for that. She must have fame ;
 She shall be made a song of in the camp,
 And have her name upon the soldier's lip
 Familiar as an oath. And when she dies
 She must write Jael on the years to come ;
 Oblivion only terrifies her heart,
 And infamy is almost twin to fame ;
 But rusting unremembered in the grave
 Is worst of all. Let Jael rest secure,
 That, if the reprobation of all time
 Fall sweetly on her ashes, hers shall be
 Perpetual condemnation. Ah, vain heart,
 Thou shalt not lie forgotten, till the stars
 Fall black into the pathways of the brine.

Can time efface a deed so wholly vile?
She stood, the mother-snake, before her tent,
She feigned a piteous dew in her false eyes,
She made her low voice gentle as a bird's,
Her one hand beckoned to the fugitive,
Her other felt along the poniard's edge
Hid near the breast where late her baby fed.
She drew the noble weary captain in ;
Her guest beneath the shelter of her home,
He laid him down to rest and had no fear.
The sacred old alliance with her clan,
The trustful calm immunity of sleep,
Sealing security each more secure.
Ah, surely, he was safe if anywhere
Beneath the mantle which she laid on him.
He was too noble to mistrust her much ;
His fading sense felt her insidious arm
Folding him warmly. Then he slept—she rose,
Slid like a snake across the tent—struck twice—
And stung him dead.

God saw to right her, up in Heaven.
The lark outside went on with his old song.
The sheep grazed, and the floating clouds came past—
Yet it was done. Sleep, guest-right, given word,
All broken, each forgotten. She had lied
Against these holiest three and slain him there.
Bonds were as straw ; if once she thought of them,
They only gave new keenness to the nail,
And made her right hand surer for the blow.
Pah ! she will come to slay her children next
For glory and a little puff of fame ;
And so they crowned her, but her myrtle roots
In strange red soil were nurtured, and their leaves
Are never wet with rain, but fed on tears.

Then Israel came with many cymbal-girls
And clashed this noble triumph into odes,
Great pæans full of noise and shaken spears,
Loud horns and blare of battle, dust, and blood.
Then shrilled that old lean shrewing prophetess,
Grey as a she-wolf on some weaned lamb's track,
Her song of death and insult on the slain ;
Then Israel's captain, holding by her skirt,
Sang second to her raving with loud words
And hare-like eyes that looked on either side,
As if in dread dead Sisera should rise

And drive him howling up the vale in fear
 With nimble heels. This captain who declared
 To this old scolding woman Deborah,
 "Except thou goest with me I remain.
 I dare not face great Sisera alone,
 Unless some female fury hound me on."
 The brave words of a captain brave as they,
 A leader chiefly bold against the slain,
 Fit jackal to the tigress which I seem,
 Worthy to share the triumph of her deed ;
 That makes her almost viler than himself,
 The craven hound tied to an old wife's strings.

My marvel is by what insidious steps
 The will to slay him ripened in my mood.
 For on that morning I had risen at peace,
 And all my soul was calmer than a pool
 Folded in vapour when the winds are gone.
 Wholly at peace, I watched the ray new-born
 In blessed streaks and rapid amber lanes
 Run out among our vale-heads : low in heaven
 One great star floated, rolling yellow light.
 For all night long my baby would not rest,
 Till the dawn drifted, at whose coming sleep
 Drew down his eyelids to my slumber song.
 He could doze cradled now beyond my arms ;
 And, as the day was instant everywhere,
 I came and held my station at the door
 To draw the glory in and make it mine.
 When suddenly a kind of weary mood
 At all my mother life and household days
 Clouded my soul and tainted her delight.
 It seemed such petty work, such wretched toil,
 To tend a child and serve a husband's whims ;
 Meek, if my lord return with sullen eyes,
 Glad, if his heart rejoice ; to watch his ways,
 Live in his eye, hoard his least careless smile ;
 Chatter with other wives, manage and hoard,
 Quarrel and make it up—and then the grave,
 Like fifty thousand other nameless girls,
 Who took their little scrap of love and sun
 Contentedly and died. Was I as these ?
 My dream was glory and their aim delight ;
 Should I be herded with their nameless dust ?
 Achievement seemed so easy to my hand
 In that great morning. All my heart ran fire,

And turning I beheld my cradled child,
And caught the coming footstep of my lord
Crisp in the grass. My waking life resumed
Its fetter as he came. Content thee, drudge,
Here is thy lot ; fool not thy heart on dreams.
Then with a little weary sigh I rose
To welcome him ; and hastily put by
The vision of the morning. As a girl,
Draping herself in secret with fine webs,
Starts at a sudden step and flings them down.
Restless he entered, gloomy, ill at ease,
Then shook himself and laughed his humour off
With an ill grace, relapsing to a frown.
And pushed about the tent arranging robes,
Searching old chests long undisturbed in dust ;
Then glancing at the wonder in my face,
Carelessly glancing, roughly he began,—
“You help me none, but marvel with big eyes
At one in household lumber elbow-deep ;
Hiding is better than the surest key.
A fight there will be ; ay, a game of blows,
Arrows and wounded men and broken wheels,—
No further than a rook flies out to feed
From this tent door. An hour remains to hide
The ore of our possessions, let the dross
Remain and sate the spearman if he comes.”
“A battle,” my lips faltered ; all my soul
Flushed out into my face on hearing it.
Was my dream come at last ? He made reply,
Misreading my emotion, “Do not fear ;
We will stand by and let them fight it out.
We have some friends at court in either camp ;
Neither will harm us, let the strong prevail.
We can await the issue and declare
For him who wins !” He laughed, and I was dumb
With bitter scorn against him in my soul,
Loathing my husband. But I tried him more—
“O lord,” I said, “let me arise and arm thee.
The cause of Israel is the holy one.
These heathen are as dust upon the earth.
Let us strike in for Israel, tho’ we die !”
“Ay, dame,” he muttered, “he is right who wins,
And Israel may be right for all I care ;
Yet Sisera is strong, and wise ones hide,
When arrow sings to arrow in the air.
If right is weak, why then the God of right

Ought to be strong enough to help his own
 Without molesting one more quiet man.
 But, while we chatter on, the morning ebbs,
 I shall sweep off our treasure to the hills.
 You and the babe may follow, as you please.
 Safe is the upland, perilous the plain ;
 How say you?" But in scorn I turned away,
 And cried "Begone, O feeble heart." He went
 Laughing and left me.

Then the battle shocks
 Deepened all morning in the vales, and died
 And freshened ; but at even I beheld
 A goodly man and footsore, whom I knew ;
 And then my dream rushed on my soul once more ;
 Saying, This man is weary, lure him in,
 And slay him ; and behold eternal fame
 Shall blare thy name up to the stars of God.
 I called him and he came. The rest is blood,
 And doom and desolation till I die !

NUPTIAL SONG

"SIGH, HEART, BREAK NOT"

SIGH, heart, and break not ; rest, lark, and wake not !
 Day I hear coming to draw my Love away.
 As mere-waves whisper, and clouds grow crisper,
 Ah, like a rose he will waken up with day.

In moon-light lonely, he is my Love only,
 I share with none when Luna rides in grey.
 As dawn-beams quicken, my rivals thicken,
 The light and deed and turmoil of the day.

To watch my sleeper to me is sweeter,
 Than any waking words my Love can say ;
 In dream he finds me and closer winds me !
 Let him rest by me a little more and stay.

Ah, mine eyes, close not : and, tho' he knows not,
 My lips, on his be tender while you may ;
 Ere leaves are shaken, and ring-doves waken,
 And infant buds begin to scent new day.

Fair Darkness, measure thine hours, as treasure
Shed each one slowly from thine urn, I pray ;
Hoard in and cover each from my lover ;
I cannot lose him yet ; dear night, delay.

Each moment dearer, true-love, lie nearer,
My hair shall blind thee lest thou see the ray ;
My locks encumber thine ears in slumber,
Lest any bird dare give thee note of day.

He rests so calmly ; we lie so warmly ;
Hand within hand, as children after play ;—
In shafted amber on roof and chamber
Dawn enters ; my Love wakens ; here is day.

RETROSPECT

IF we have pondered on a face,
In yonder age of simple days,
If burning lips of first embrace
Sealed us as pilgrims in love's ways :

The silly chains became us well,
When rosy lay the orchard roods,
And April buds began to swell,
And starlings thought about their broods.

The easy fetters bound us sweet ;
The shrill lark dwindled overhead.
The land lay incense at our feet.
We did not dream upon the dead !

With ardent cheek and earnest breath
We plighted unenduring vows ;
And bound, instead of amaranth wreath,
Deciduous roses round our brows.

Bud after bud descends to dust ;
Those rare years sigh and go their way.
We leave our garlands, since we must,
When heads begin to gather grey.

Then farewell, Love, for other skies,
We laud thee now we need thee least.
We will not be as guests, who rise,
And, risen, chide against a feast.

Untainted we will always save
The sweet of thy memorial joy ;
Let fools thy royal table leave
And soil the banquet with alloy.

Go, harpy, with thy loathsome wing,
Go, cynic, with thy touch of mire !
We hold it an ignoble thing
To laugh against our old desire ;

Ye seem to scorn Love's richer hour,
In envy half, but more in craft,
And wholly sullen : since your flower
Is withered on its autumn shaft.

We least will ape this dotard's part,
Who sneers at love in aspen tone,
Who jests on his once wholesome heart,
And cheapens all who still have one.

He hardens in his selfish crust ;
His blear eyes only understand
Three things as comely—wine, and lust,
And greed which guides the palsied hand.

Irreverent, isolated thing !
Old scare-crow on the field of vice,
Some rags of youth around thee cling
To flutter in a land of ice !

Leave in his shrine, veiled round and sad,
The Amor of thy tender days.
Thank Heaven that once thou couldst be glad,
Be silent, if thou canst not praise.

Ah, crush not in with tainted feet :
Is thy thought cankered, keep away.
Tho' idols snap, and fair things fleet,
Leave one spot pure wherein to pray.

Some day indeed, before thy last,
When all life's boughs are bare of fruit,
When mock and sneer are overpast,
And every shallow laugh is mute,

Come to this haven, and unveil
The imaged face thy youth held best,
Kneel down before it, have thy wail,
And crawl the better to thy rest.

ZEUS

WHO hath revealed his name,
Father of clouds, eternal, king of death,
Who, ere the mountains came,
Or gentle winds drew breath,
Sat in the morning light and had no care,
Great and austere, fair,
For ages and for ages, till at last
Creation ripened fast,
And at his feet the infant world began.
Under his throne the dew and spice of morn
And little wells arose,
The glory of the leaves, and newly born
The wonder of the rose.
Murmur and supplication, laugh and prayer,
Came up like vapour to his footstool there :
And the faint pulse of distant throbbing woe
Seemed as an echo very far below,
A moan the wind beats back, a sound that cannot grow.

He will not comfort any in their pain,
To whom the treasures of the isles belong ;
He will not hear tho' hecatombs are slain,
Deaf to the droning augur's chanted song.
Put by thy hymn and weep thy weeping, he is strong.
He is so strong, desire of him no aid.
Melt out the rocks with weeping at thy harm,
Thou shalt not make him as a man afraid,
Or overcome the shadow of his calm.
His brother gods that feast up there with him
Are bowed before him ere they touch the cup.
His presence makes their lesser glories dim,
And underneath his throne earth's wail comes up.

And now men praise him that he is so great,
 And now they curse him that he lets them die,
 And now some blessing feign, dissembling hate.
 But one and all he lets their wail go by.
 And now he slumbers on the tinted cloud,
 While sick on earth the feeble nations fear
 With eyes that fail and forehead earthward bowed,
 "Zeus, if thy name be Zeus, waken and hear."

Descend and break the mountains, if thou hearest,
 Awake, arise, and smite the secret seas.
 Put on that strength of panoply thou wearest,
 When thou dost rise to prosper thy decrees.
 Say to the deep "Refrain thy ocean roaring ;"
 Command the darkened places of the wind.
 Bid thou the cloud dissolve her stately soaring ;
 Call to the tempest, "Flee thou like a hind :"
 Bind up in vapour thy strong golden light.
 Make pale the mild uprisings of the stars.
 Scatter in weeping the broad earth's delight ;
 Assume thy vengeance, thou of many wars.
 O tried and terrible, resume thy sword,
 Mighty in visitation, prove thy spear,
 Lay to thine hand to justify thy word,
 Zeus, if thy name be Zeus, waken and hear.

Ah, lord, ah, strong and sudden god, whose feet
 Rest on the throb of all created pain,
 Thou feelest thy dominion is so sweet,
 Thou wilt not loose one rivet of our chain :
 Thou wilt not say, "Arise, and taste again
 Love and the genial hour
 Where no cloud came :
 Clothe back upon thy darling's cheek its flower,
 And fear no blame.
 Was she not wholly sweet and bound to thee
 With innocent joy ?
 But this I did destroy
 By the great might and scathe of my decree.
 Worm, what is this to me,
 If time flowed sweetly once and now is ended ?
 Before thou knewest I was great,
 Thy lips my ways commended ;
 When thou, secure of Fate,
 And dreaming all things good,
 By reed-embroidered rill,

And Dryad-haunted wood,
Didst guide thy random feet,
And found the whole world sweet.
The Naiad in the spray
Beckoned thee, tender-eyed,
And in old lovers' way
The fond earth maiden sighed.
Life in the hands of Time
Disclosed a perfect flower,
And in thy golden prime
Some mild old dim-eyed god smiled on thee for an hour."

Thou art not mild, mysterious ! and thine eyes
Reach as the lightning reaches, and thy hands
Smite down the old perfections of the earth,
That came with blind old Saturn's dead commands,
And totter with his fall. The new god stands
Supreme, altho' his royal robe is wet
With his sire's blood ; and in his ears as yet
There waileth on a father's agony,
And yet he falters nothing : and shall we,
Hopeless of mercy, vex our soul with fears ?
Nay, rather crave his thunder, if he hears
And is not drowsy with his long revenge.

Who shall ascend unto thine iron eyes,
Who shall make moan or prayer that may prevail ?
For thou art satiate with so many sighs,
I do not think O Zeus, thou wilt arise,
Fed with delight and all sweet dream and thought,
Thou wilt not rise supreme
In thy beatitude ;
For fleeting love is nought,
And human gratitude
In thy cold splendid cloud must tremble to intrude.

Let us go up and look him in the face,
We are but as he made us ; the disgrace
Of this, our imperfection, is his own.
And unabashed in that fierce glare and blaze,
Front him and say,
" We come not to atone,
To cringe and moan :
God, vindicate thy way.
Erase the staining sorrow we have known,
Thou, whom ill things obey ;

And give our clay
 Some master bliss imperial as thy own :
 Or wipe us quite away,
 Far from the ray of thine eternal throne.
 Dream not, we love this sorrow of our breath,
 Hope not, we wince or palpitate at death ;
 Slay us, for thine is nature and thy slave :
 Draw down her clouds to be our sacrifice,
 And heap unmeasured mountain for our grave,
 With peaks of fire and ice.
 Flicker one cord of lightning, north to south,
 And mix in awful glories wood and cloud ;
 We shall have rest, and find
 Illimitable darkness for our shroud ;
 We shall have peace, then, surely, when thy mouth
 Breathes us away into the darkness blind,
 Then only kind."

A LEAVE-TAKING

KNEEL not and leave me : mirth is in its grave.
 True friend, sweet words were ours, sweet words decay.
 Believe, the perfume once this violet gave
 Lives—lives no more, though mute tears answer nay.
 Break off delay !

Dead, Love is dead ! Ay, cancelled all his due.
 We say he mocks repose—we cannot tell—
 Close up his eyes and crown his head with rue,
 Say in his ear, sweet Love, farewell ! farewell !
 A last low knell.

Forbear to move him. Peace, why should we stay ?
 Go back no more to listen for his tread.
 Resume our old calm face of every day :
 Not all our kneeling turns that sacred head
 Long dear, long dead !

Go with no tear-drop ; Love has died before :
 Stay being foolish ; being wise begone.
 Let severed ways estrange thy weak heart more.
 Go, unregretful, and refrain thy moan.
 Depart alone.

HE MAY WHO CAN

WE are wise, the world is old,
Antic changes shift and hold.
Boys will swear, and maids will weep,
Weep and smile again.

Songs are for an April breast,
Feathers for a gleaming crest.
They may wake that need no sleep,
Sing, that feel no pain.

In a race young limbs are fleetest,
Boyhood's mouth can kiss the sweetest.
Palsy cheek and head of grey,
Mope beside thy fire.

Changes push us on our grave ;
Can we keep the orts we have ?
Ours is but a waning day,
What should we desire ?

MISREPRESENTATION

PEACE, there is nothing more for men to speak ;
A larger wisdom than our lips' decrees.
Of that dumb mouth no longer reason seek,
No censure reaches that eternal peace,
And that immortal ease.

Believe them not that would disturb the end
With earth's invidious comment, idly meant.
Speak and have done thy evil ; for my friend
Is gone beyond all human discontent,
And wisely went.

Say what you will and have your sneer and go.
You see the specks, we only heed the fruit
Of a great life, whose truth—men hate truth so—
No lukewarm age of compromise could suit.
Laugh and be mute !

OPHELIA

OPHELIA

LOST in a wilderness of ill,
Wan with a yearning never still,
O tell me where, most tuneful rill,
Can I recover rest ?

Thy waves roll under meadows brown,
And draw the thirsty daisies down ;
It cannot hurt them much to drown,
In death's green water-nest.

Among the meads of dædal May,
Around the roots of aspens grey,
Thy ripple holds delicious way,
A couch where dreams are sweet ;

Thy lilies shall my pillow be,
My coverlet the water free,
My sheet the white anemone,
My lullaby thy beat.

Gone without warning elsewhere
My lover leaves me to despair ;
Sorrow and love are sore to bear,
Love goes and sorrow stays.

O father dead ; O love untrue,
Lips at whose touch mine own grew new,
As pallid buds expand, if dew
Drop after droughty days.

My father in his grave is fair,
The shroud is round his silver hair ;
I love the hand that laid him there,
And wrought my bosom's woe.

O pale dead father laid in night,
My bud of spring is slain with blight,
My soul is weary of the light
And lonely ; let her go.

I weep indeed ; and both are gone—
Ah, most I love the cruel one,
Who loved me once, now loves me none,
Dear author of my fears.

And so I wander by the brim,
 And gather buds to think of him,
 And find their eyes are dewy-dim,
 As mine are, wan with tears.

The sad sweet avens as in dream
 Bends o'er the bosom of the stream,
 And hangs her rosy head : I seem
 Like this deserted bloom.

The fishes watch her, amber-eyed,
 The tide-grass swims from side to side,
 As sweetly will the river glide,
 And kiss me in my tomb.

And he—God knows !—when nestlings break
 Their eggs next summer, and the lake
 Is sown with snowy hawthorn flake,—
 May wander one day here,

The darling of my troth and trust,
 When he is crowned and I am dust,
 May lean and weep—Ah, but he must—
 At least one little tear

Into my crystal urn, when bees
 Are roving, and the skies at peace,
 And love, my pain, at ease, at ease,
 In my sweet river-bier !

NIMROD

*Vedeà Nembrotte appit del gran lavoro
 Quasi smarrito, e riguardar le genti
 Che in Sennaar con lui superbi foro.*

—DANTE

TOWARDS thy great clouds I reach my arms and cry,
 Confounded yet unconquered, if my power
 Could rend thee down, thou tyrant, from thy seat,
 Then would I barter twenty million years
 Of agonies, if at the last revenge
 Would crown me lord and master for a day.

Ye hireling nations melting at his hand
Across the plain, who is your king but I?
Who made you one and held you by the bond
Of kingship, till the world had never seen
Your like for strength and empire, firm as gods?
Were ye not strays upon the earth before?
Weak as the puny rillets of the hill,
I rolled you into one imperial stream,
Grinding the mountains where ye chose to tread,
Not to be turned aside, more strong than they.
Together we were masters of the earth,
Divided ye were nothing, this ye knew;
And he the tyrant knew it as his throne
Trembled beneath him. Then we fared along
And found this Shinar level as a sea,
Perpetual plain, and the low cloud came down
And touched the verge wherever we beheld.
I looked, and in my wake there journeyed on
The leagues of nations lessening o'er the waste
In coils of distance; I was king of these,
And at one spoken word their strength was mine.
There came a mighty thought upon my brain:
I knew that it was greater than myself
And quailed in joy before it, as it said,—
“Monarch of nations, thou hast conquered much
And always: there is nothing for thy spear;
And it is puny praise to conquer men
And stale endeavour: look upon the clouds,
They are not hung so high above thy head
As is the length of nations in thy wake:
Reach them and find at last an equal foe:
Reach them, resistless king, and war with gods,
That tremble now to think thou hast divined
How great thou art, how very weak are they.”

I paused and made the mighty thought a deed.
The nations came around me, and a shout
Of myriads hailed me God in my device.
And straight they went about it, mad with zeal.
The stiff blue clay lay ready at our hand;
It seemed that nature owned her future lord,
And brought the humble tribute of her earth
To build his throne, and laid it at his feet.
Eager they dug and baked the moulded marl;
And all the plain lay like a heaven of stars
With frequent kiln at midnight, and by day

An under-heaven of blue and crisping cloud.
And the tower rose : the masons at its height
Could see the ocean now that we had left
A year behind us : ever at its base
The thousand-throated labour like a sea
Continually murmured : tier on tier
It darkened heaven, a monster in the sand,
And height succeeded height and pause was none :
Until its summits entered in the zones
Of cloud, and these about it clave all day
As on some giant peak untrod of man.
And the cloud made the tiers above itself
Seem more stupendous, and yet pause was none.
And now I thought, this wish is in my hand,
And at the base I held my men of war
In harness for encounter, to ascend
When the word came that heaven was scaled at last :
For now the cloud was permanent, and still
The men built in it, hoping to emerge
Up thro' the rack upon the floor of heaven.

And still they built : and mad in our desire
We waited : slowly height on height it drew :
"An hour and we attain it." Sudden light
Broke from above, "Ye armies, heaven is won :
I lead you, come." A roar behind me came,
As if against the land I led the sea :
And now I set my foot upon the stair—
When darkness drave in on my brain—I fell.

There as I lay confounded, like a child
That cannot move his limbs ; it seemed there grew
Enormous light out up above the cloud :
And smote the cloudy bastions, like a sun
Rending the mists, to put them at a sweep
From some long coast for ever : light of light
Glowed in the core of vapour, writhing it :
The blue haze crushed and shuddered as it came :
Whereon a voice to hear as terrible,
As, to behold, that radiance, throb by throb,
Dealt out its language larger than the sense
Of man receives in meanings on his brain.

Dead by the courses of their bricks they lay
The builders : one escaping down the stair
Spake idiot-like with charr'd distorted face,
And gibbered out a language of the dead.

And, as he spake, confusion seemed to spread
Upon our tongues who heard him. Hideous fear
Supplanted man's familiar eloquence
To jargon viler than a drunkard's song.
And I, altho' the god-voice and the light
Dazed me, arose, and cried to rally them,
"Be not afraid, this terror is not long :
If we possess our souls in such deep fear,
Then are we masters of these gods that know
No further torment for us : heaven is ours :
More great for this repulse I lead you on."
They heard a sound of language at my lips :
They knew my tone, the gesture of command :
Then for a moment instinct, lord of fear,
Rallied their ranks behind me : not for long :
I was to these a babbler as the rest.
Their fellow's language on their ear became
Ineffable confusion, idiot sound.
They bore it but an instant and they fled :
They turned their eyes to all the winds of heaven,
And trod each other in their panic down :
And melted through the broad earth every way
In mad divergence, to escape alone
The mighty horror of the place. They left
The tower of their confusion, as one great
Unfinished protest of the toil of men
Against the lazy tyrants of the sky.
They fled : I raised my reeling blinded eyes,
Against the mocking clouds my hands I spread,
And cursed my birth, for on the Shinar plain,
Monarch of nations, lo, I stand alone.

THE KNIGHT IN THE WOOD

THE thing itself was rough and crudely done,
Cut in coarse stone, spitefully placed aside
As merest lumber, where the light was worst
On a back staircase. Overlooked it lay
In a great Roman palace crammed with art.
It had no number in the list of gems,
Weeded away long since, pushed out and banished,
Before insipid Guidos over-sweet

And Dolce's rose sensationalities,
 And curly chirping angels spruce as birds.
 And yet the motive of this thing ill-hewn
 And hardly seen *did* touch me. O, indeed,
 The skill-less hand that carved it had belonged
 To a most yearning and bewildered brain :
 There was such desolation in the work ;
 And through its utter failure the thing spoke
 With more of human message, heart to heart,
 Than all these faultless, smirking, skin-deep saints,
 In artificial troubles picturesque,
 And martyred sweetly, not one curl awry—
 Listen ; a clumsy knight, who rode alone
 Upon a stumbling jade in a great wood
 Belated. The poor beast with head low-bowed
 Snuffing the treacherous ground. The rider leant
 Forward to sound the marish with his lance.
 You saw the place was deadly ; that doomed pair,
 The wretched rider and the hide-bound steed,
 Feared to advance, feared to return—That's all !

THE CHURCHYARD ON THE SANDS

My Love lies in the gates of foam,
 The last dear wreck of shore ;
 The naked sea-marsh binds her home,
 The sand her chamber door.

The grey gull flaps the written stones,
 The ox-birds chase the tide ;
 And near that narrow field of bones
 Great ships at anchor ride.

Black piers with crust of dripping green,
 One foreland, like a hand,
 O'er intervals of grass between
 Dim lonely dunes of sand.

A church of silent weathered looks,
 A breezy reddish tower,
 A yard whose mounded resting-nooks
 Are tinged with sorrel flower.

In peace the swallow's eggs are laid
 Along the belfry walls ;
 The tempest does not reach her shade,
 The rain her silent halls.

But sails are sweet in summer sky,
 The lark throws down a lay ;
 The long salt levels steam and dry,
 The cloud-heart melts away.

But patches of the sea-pink shine,
 The pied crows poise and come ;
 The mallow hangs, the bindweeds twine,
 Where her sweet lips are dumb.

The passion of the wave is mute ;
 No sound or ocean shock ;
 No music save the trilling flute
 That marks the curlew flock.

But yonder when the wind is keen,
 And rainy air is clear,
 The merchant city's spires are seen,
 The toil of men grows near.

Along the coast-way grind the wheels
 Of endless carts of coal ;
 And on the sides of giant keels
 The shipyard hammers roll.

The world creeps here upon the shout,
 And stirs my heart in pain ;
 The mist descends and blots it out,
 And I am strong again.

Strong and alone, my dove, with thee ;
 And, tho' mine eyes be wet,
 There's nothing in the world to me
 So dear as my regret.

I would not change my sorrow, sweet,
 For others' nuptial hours ;
 I love the daisies at thy feet
 More than their orange flowers.

My hand alone shall tend thy tomb
 From leaf-bud to leaf-fall,
 And wreathe around each season's bloom
 Till autumn ruins all.

Let snowdrops, early in the year,
 Droop o'er her silent breast ;
 And bid the later cowslip rear
 The amber of its crest.

Come hither, linnets tufted-red,
 Drift by, O wailing tern ;
 Set pure vale lilies at her head,
 At her feet lady-fern.

Grow, samphire, at the tidal brink,
 Wave, pansies of the shore,
 To whisper how alone I think
 Of her for evermore.

Bring blue sea-hollies thorny, keen,
 Long lavender in flower ;
 Grey wormwood like a hoary queen,
 Stanch mullein like a tower.

O sea-wall mounded long and low,
 Let iron bounds be thine ;
 Nor let the salt wave overflow
 That breast I held divine.

Nor float its sea-weed to her hair,
 Nor dim her eyes with sands :
 No fluted cockle burrow where
 Sleep folds her patient hands.

Tho' thy crest feel the wild sea's breath,
 Tho' tide-weight tear thy root,
 Oh, guard the treasure house, where Death
 Has bound my darling mute.

Tho' cold her pale lips to reward
 With Love's own mysteries,
 Ah, rob no daisy from her sward,
 Rough gale of eastern seas !

A LAMENT FOR ADONIS

Ah, render sere no silken bent,
 That by her head-stone waves ;
 Let noon and golden summer blent
 Pervade these ocean graves.

And, ah, dear heart, in thy still nest,
 Resign this earth of woes,
 Forget the ardours of the west,
 Neglect the morning glows.

Sleep, and forget all things but one,
 Heard in each wave of sea,—
 How lonely all the years will run
 Until I rest by thee.

A LAMENT FOR ADONIS

WE will lament the beautiful Adonis !
 The sleepy clouds are lull'd in all their trails.
 The river-beds are weary for the rain.
 The branchy volumes of the clouded pines,
 Like drooping banners, in excess of noon
 Languish beneath the forehead of the sun :
 Nor dares one gale to breathe, one ivy-leaf
 To flicker on its strings about the boles.

Lament Adonis here in dead-ripe noon ;
 Weep for her weeping, Queen of love and dream,
 Disconsolate, love's ruler love-bereaved :
 Where is thy godhead fallen, what avail
 To throne it on the clouds yet lose thy joy ?
 Couldst thou not hold Adonis on thy lips
 Eternally, and scorn the ebbing years ?
 This, this were meed of immortality,
 To wear thy stately love secure and fair
 Of rainy eyes : now shalt thou ne'er resume,
 Enamoured Queen, thy shelter at his heart :
 His arms no longer Aphrodite's nest.

Kneel then, and weep with her and weep with her.
 It is not meet that pure cheek's crimsoning,
 It is not fate those bloom-ripe limbs endure
 The stain of thick corruption and the rule

Of common natures. Queen, possess thy power,
Raise him beyond the region of the sun ;
There cherish back the heavy eyes to blend
With that full morning of the ageless gods :
Watch him to life in bloomy asphodel,
Dissolve thy soul on his reviving lips.

In vain, 'tis idle dreaming this shall be.
In vain, ye maidens, this our sister toil
To scatter posies on his patient sleep
With dole for him that was so beautiful :
He shall not wake from that lethean dream :
He shall not move for her immortal smile,
Nor hear the busy kisses at his cheek :
She ceases and she sobs upon her hands :
Come, let us weep with her and weep with her.

Smother his head with roses as he lies.
The day may draw the sacred twilight down :
The dew lights on the grasses and the leaves
May speck the woods, as night the sky, with stars ;
The sun-down gale shall not, because we weep,
Forego her perfume, or night's bird her song.
Nature is greater than the grief of gods,
And Pan prevails, while dynasties in heaven
Rule out their little eons and resign
The thunder and the throne to younger hands.
He is the rock and these the rounding waves.

Lament not, Queen of love, lament no more :
Nature and Love alone are ageless powers ;
Thy queendom, Aphrodite, shall not fail.
The reign of might shall fail, the wisdom fail
That wrought out heavenly thrones : the weary clouds
Shall not sustain them longer : only Love
And Nature are immortal. Nature sealed
Adonis' eyes : the kindly hand forgave
The creeping years that held Tithonus old
Before her eyes who loved and saw him fade.

Have comfort ; and our homeward choir shall hymn
Thy godhead thro' the cedarn labyrinths,
Till they emerge upon the flushing sheet
Of sunset : on those waters many an isle

And cape and sacred foreland ripe with eve,
 Cherish thy myrtle in delicious groves :
 Infinite worship at this hour is thine.
 They name thee Aphrodite, and the name
 Blends with the incense towards the crimson cloud.

THE OCEAN WOOD

GREY woods within whose silent shade
 The ocean voice is dimly known :
 Where undisturbed the violets fade,
 And roses perish overblown.

Calm rests the wave against the beach :
 Calm rocks the wave-bird on its tide,
 And calmer in their heaven than each,
 The gleaming bands of sunset ride.

Soon will the ripple move again :
 Soon will the shorelark flute its song :
 And in sweet emphasis of pain
 The rock-dove mourn the cliffs along.

Sweet shall resound the curlew's wail,
 New sails come sweeping up the sea.
 But all the ships that ever sail
 Will bring no comfort home to me.

AN ODE

SIRE of the rising day,
 Lord of the faded ray,
 King of sweet ways of morn or daylight done.
 Ruler of cloud and sleep,
 Whose tread is on the deep,
 Whose feet are red in glory like the sun.
 Whose hand binds up the winds as in a sheaf,
 Whose shadow makes them tremble like a leaf.

Lordship and Fear are thine,
Upon whose brow divine
The diadem of pale eternal fire
Burns over eyes that fear
No stain of earthly tear,
Nor soften for a yearning world's desire.
The treasure of strong thunder at thy hand
Waits like an eagle watching thy command.

Thee rosy beams enshroud ;
Rich airs and amber cloud
Reach the calm golden spaces of thy hall.
The floods awake with noise
Churning the deep, whose voice,
Thou heedest not ; altho' the storm-wind call,
And break beneath the swollen vapour-bands,
In wild rains wearing at the sodden lands.

Can then our weak-winged prayer
Ascend and touch thee there,
Sailing between the gleaming gates of heaven ?
Can our wail climb and smite
Thy council-seat of light ?
Where for a garment is the moon-ray given
To clothe thy shoulders, and blue star-dust strown
Bickers about the borders of thy throne.

Ah, Lord, who may withstand
One reaching of thy hand,
Who from thy fury fence his house secure ?
What citadel is there,
In lifted hand or prayer,
If all the radiant heaven may not endure
The scathing of thine anger, keen to blight
The strong stars rolling in their fields of light ?

Arise and take thine ease,
For thou art Lord ; and these
Are but as sprinkled dust before thy power.
Art thou the less divine,
If they lift hands and whine,
Or less eternal since they crawl an hour ?
After a little pain to fold their hands,
And perish like the beasts that tilled their lands.

They dug their field and died,
 Believed thee or denied ;
 Cursed at thy name, or fed thy shrine with fume.
 Loved somewhat, hated more,
 Hoarded, grew stiff and sore,
 Gat sturdy sons to labour in their room ;
 Became as alien faces in their land ;
 Died, worn and done with as a waste of sand.

Strong are alone the dead.
 They need not bow the head,
 Or reach one hand in ineffectual prayer.
 Safe in their iron sleep
 What wrong shall make them weep,
 What sting of human anguish reach them there ?
 They are gone safe beyond the strong one's reign,
 Who shall decree against them any pain ?

Will they entreat in tears
 The inexorable years
 To sprinkle trouble gently on their head ?
 Safe in their house of grass,
 Eternity may pass,
 And be to these an instant in its tread,
 Calm as an autumn night, brief as the song
 Of the wood dove. The dead alone are strong.

Love is not there, nor Hate,
 Weak slaves of feebler Fate,
 Their lord is nothing here, his reign is done.
 Here side by side can lie
 Glory and Infamy,
 Hero and herdsman in red earth are one.
 Their day is over : sad they silence keep,
 Abashed before the perfect crowning sleep.

THE PILGRIM CRANES

THE pilgrim cranes are moving to their south,
 The clouds are herded pale and rolling slow.
 One flower is withered in the warm wind's mouth,
 Whereby the gentle waters always flow.

The cloud-fire wanes beyond the lighted trees.
The sudden glory leaves the mountain dome.
Sleep into night, old anguish mine, and cease
To listen for a step that will not come.

PANDORA

A Dialogue

PROMETHEUS—EPIMETHEUS—PANDORA

EPIMETHEUS

PEACE, in the bright courts of the tyrant, peace !
Rest, for the sweet world slain beneath his frown !
The strange sound deepens, peace ! our war is
done.

Strangely hath Zeus remembered mercy now.
The prince god folds away his deadly shafts.
The strong one moves his arrow from its string,
Softens his stern lip-corners to a smile,
And reaches out, as friend with friend, his hand
Grown tired with hurling down perpetual death.
Evil indeed that battle where none win.
Weary is he and weary am I of war ;
He, the unwearied, hungers for his rest.
If neither race prevail, as neither may,
It is an idle thing with lidless eyes
To watch each other, each bereaved of calm.
We can disturb his peace, he ruin ours,
And still no truce, no interval, no respite.
Rejoice, if now be done these bitter ways ;
Break into song and take hereafter ease.
Smile, O thou warrior Titan, smile at last
To find love fairer than perpetual fear.
Behold, what love I bring thee, clear as air,
Strange as a dream, soft as a mountain down,
And moulded as the pauses of a song ;
Even such a gracious thing and excellent
I found this woman, in the shining lands
Beyond the meadow parcels of blown seed,
Between the millet and the junipers,

Languid as one from slumber newly come,
And still her eyes had soft desire of sleep.
In wonder I beheld and made no word,
Till of herself she moved her lips to sound ;
“ Thus to the Titan saith the lord of clouds,
O race, unwearied, full of war and toil,
Fate is more strong than your contentious arms.
Ye hate, shall hatred then unsceptre Zeus,
Or anger empty any throne in heaven ?
I fear you not and yet ye weary me.
That our old strife may therefore merge and die,
I send this woman for a marriage gift.
Let her accomplish peace for me with thine,
Prometheus : be content : I have forgiven.
Thine old rebellions I have put away,
And my reward outweighs the harm I gave thee.
Shall not her love efface the thunder scars,
Wherewith I drave thee backward from my realm ? ”
Therefore I joying led her to thy face,
Here where the red cliff fronts the flats of sand,
And short salt grasses cease in mountain sedge.

PROMETHEUS

Art sister to the race of sleep and dust,
Or goddess scorning kinship with the dead ?

PANDORA

The ruler sends me as his daughter down
To kneel and touch thy strong hand with meek lips,
His daughter and his gift, saying, Be friends,
Take her and love her, Titan, but forgive.

PROMETHEUS

Is Zeus grown sudden-generous to his foes ?

PANDORA

Nay, but it irks him thro' eternal hours
To hold his arrow always on the string.

PROMETHEUS

Hast thou alone, O maid, of living souls,
Heard this thing speak, as men speak, word and tone ?
I feel his hand is heavy indeed to slay,
But he will never face me eye to brow.
I should not greatly fear him, tyrant, then ;
But now he lets his mischiefs speak for him.

PANDORA

Zeus in my waking life I have not seen ;
A swift dream brought this word, faded and went,
Before thy brother's footstep snapt my sleep.
From my birth-trance in wonder I arose.
But of my past remembrance none remains.
I know not if I lived ere this day woke ;
Or in what fields I wandered other hours.
Yet earth is half familiar to mine eyes ;
And in my thought old broken images
Mix with the present and confuse me wholly.
I am as one, who, eating some strange root,
Loses life-record in the taste of it.

PROMETHEUS

I praise thee nothing, brother, for thy joy.
If thou hast found a marvel, to thy harm
This crafty Zeus hath brought thy feet to find,
And stumble on his most pernicious gift.
Wiser have left it in the meadow reeds,
Gotten thee home again and had no heed.
Doth Zeus repent and love us, O unwise ?
Shall we not rather weary out the stars,
Eons and eons, with this feud of ours ?
Wrinkles will creep on the eternal sun,
And all large hills be vallied in waste seas,
Ere one prevail. Conquest alone is Peace.
And now, forsooth, he overflows with gifts.
Much careth he, the crafty, how I wed.
Nay, this is some delusion of his own
To work me death : this thing being wonderful,
Specious, a fair trap to hold bound men's eyes ;
Since she is smooth and pleasant as a wave,

Fresh as a sea-flower, polished as its sea ;
With a sweet subtle sadness haunting her,
And ruling all her beauty with a calm
That is the crown of beauty ; being fair,
As the gods give their daughters to be fair,
Still grace divine disdaining much to weep
And far above all laughter. Such an one
As this beholding the fool human heart
Leaps greatly, is suffused with blind delight,
As tho' it stumbled on some mighty good
Entreated long of the deaf gods in prayer.
But this soft creature with her gracious ways
And warmth and perfume and light fugitive glances,
Whence is her birth, my brother, whence her charm ?
Who wove the amber light into her hair,
Who gave her all the changes of her eyes ?
Who framed the treasures of her breast, and carved
The balmy marvel of her throat, whose hand
Fashioned the silver curving shoulder down ?
Who clothed her limbs with colour like soft fruit,
Who wrought and rounded her swift gleaming feet ?
Come, let us reason this, desire is blind,
And brief is love that follows of desire ;
Yea, very brief, but often at the end
Treason and fire and poison, death and harm.
Titans are we, not wholly gods, but more
Than gods in this, if we possess our souls.
Why should we hanker after her sweet hands ?
Let her be lovelier than the birth of light,
Why should the incense of her presence move
The soul-embattled Titan from resolve
To have no dealing with the false arch-god,
But to let always the clear flame of hate
Burn steadily between his house and ours ?
Can Zeus be sour in soul and sweet in gift ?
An evil tree grows only poisoned fruit.
Can he renounce his nature in an hour ?
Can he be piteous even to harmless men,
And these have done no insult to his throne ?
But we the Titan seed alone endure,
And quail not, when he thunders in a world
Where all things else are chained beneath his feet.
We toss defiance to his arrogant face,
While all sweet nature grovels at his heel.
Us he detests, us he abhors, us fears :
Wilt thou have gift of such, for I will none ?

PANDORA

Cruel art thou, Prometheus, being wise,
And yet not greatly cunning after all.
Art thou no match for one weak girl that weeps,
Thou Titan that would mate thyself with Zeus?
Tears are my wisdom, and my speech alone
To kneel and put my cheek against thy hand,
And weep a little over it and say,
"Fear me, my King, for I am terrible."
I, utterly broken, weaker than a weed,
Am God's strong vengeance whom these Titans fear.
She is worth trembling at, this girl that weeps,
And awful, being melted into tears,
Sighing she threatens and entreating slays :
Zeus and his thunder fear not, but fear me.
Woe, then, to the arch-god's crown, wail for his throne ;
How shall his ruling comfort him at all ?
Doth he not vainly build pavilion clouds,
And bind sweet crisping heaven beneath his feet,
That he tread firm and warmly in his realm ;
And when these Titans scorn and spit at him,
Can he invent no vengeance but a girl ?
Thou sayest this Zeus is evil, let him be ;
How should a woman reason of the gods ?
Yet are they fierce and strange and sullen lords,
As thy word goes ; they faint not, neither weep ;
Shall they repent, be broken, bow them down ?
Surely they shall not falter or remove,
Tho' they rule blind and stay themselves on fear.
Reville them ; what have I to do with these ?
Heal thou my tears ; I care not how they rule.
I only know that I am desolate,
Since thou dost turn away thy gracious eyes
In anger, saying, "This woman means me death."
Excellent Titan, O great king, my light,
To whom my nature blindly feels for aid,
Hath not some fateful power supreme and strange
Impelled me to thy presence, laid mine arms
With feeble claspings at thy mighty knees,
Saying, "Behold thy king, adore him well,
Lord of thy service, master of thy days."
Do then my trembling arms and suppliant hands,
My lids unlifted, my short eager breath,
Do these resemble Death and Vengeance so,
That thou must push me off and stride away ?
Thy hard eyes reason on each tear I shed ;

With wise incurious musings, careless cold,
Gloating on me unbeautified in pain,
Thou weighest all my movements of despair.
Lo, one word spoken and my lips are mute ;
I, that am held this subtle poison plague,
This utmost curse, born of thy tyrant's hate,
I even, I, strewn in this dust, demand ;
Doth the vine, feeling for her elm to raise
Her frail limp garland-branch and pendant rings,
Mean any death to that which is her stay ?
On whom her feeble arms may lean and thrive,
Since lonely and without him die she must ?
Ah, such a death, ah, such a loving curse
Would I be round thee, my great elm, my king ;
Ah, such a trouble my warm arms, such fear
My love, such hate my kisses. Let Zeus be ;
Can he turn my love backward if he choose,
Can he command desire as babes are led ?
God is not strong against a woman's love ;
And, tho' Zeus lust to crush thy race and thee,
Zeus will not make me harm thee, if I love.
Nature is more than any god of these.
Let mercy guide thee if love may not lead.
Thou art so great and wise, my puny love
Would only vex thee, like an insect's wing
Scarce worthy to be brushed in scorn aside.
Let me remain and dream not to be loved,
Where I may hear thy voice, and watch thine eyes,
And the large gleams of purpose in their light ;
Healer of worlds, thou godlier than all gods ;
In whom the warm half mortal human heart
Tempers chill ichors of Olympian veins.
Leave me thy presence only ; for I faint
In this sweet nature mateless and alone.
The steep grey woods, the broken mountain halls
Crush me with power. The lonely wave on the cliff
Has tongue to make me tremble. The crisp cloud
Rolling along shadows me like a fear.
And all the old stern creations of the world,
Founded for ever, still and lovely powers,
Oppress my soul ; till in their ageless eyes
I seem to usurp in daring to live on.
Yea, the large luminous unclouded Heaven
Narrows about me full of voice and whisper.
Let me from these grey ancient presences
Creep to thy shadow and assuage my dread.

Let me lie down with thy strong hunting dogs
And guard the curtain-fold against thy tent ;
Make me thy slave, no more ; almost thy hound.
Employ me in some petty useful way,
To watch thee sleeping and draw panther skins
Warm to thy shoulder ; as soft equal night
Alters to chill touched by sweet scent of dawn.
Or I have old-world harmonies to sing
And fill thy wakeful eyes with folded sleep ;
But in keen day, when thy wise thought has wing,
Vain words of mine thy musings shall not break,
But I will sit and love and be most still.

EPIMETHEUS

Wisdom is much, my brother : thou art wise.
But reason over-strained is Folly's thrall.
Can this white perfect creature, excellent,
Steeped in the lovely tincture of pale light,
Round her the scent of rainy forest pines,
With hair like soft bents full of seed and flower,
Lie with her lips against her sacred form ?
Most holy must she be that is so fair ;
Her fresh young beauty answers for her truth.
I hold thee then intolerably wise
To dare make weep a thing so strangely sweet.
Prove her untruth ; I am content to seem
For such delicious falsehood wholly fool.
If thy perfection be the mask of guile,
Slay me, sweet lily ; I accept my doom.
For how should I in after hours endure,
If one year's flight reveal thee as divine,
As we accept thee lovely, and discern
Glory celestial in thine outward frame,—
If, fearing stain or ambush taint within,
I roughly move thee from my path, and go
A fool for ever aping wisdom ill ?
But, O my brother, what a shaken life
Broken with lees, stained with great drops and dust,
Thou minglest to thy soul renouncing love,
Scoffing at rest and spitting out at peace.
And thou art ever railing on this Zeus ;
Clothed round and haunted with perpetual fear,
And drooping at his vengeance. Dream thy fill,
Thou wakest up with Zeus ; at festival
There is thy Zeus in every cup again.
So now this phantom scares thee from the joy

Holy and best, commended of all gods.
 Wilt thou refuse this glowing lovely fruit
 Lest Zeus should put thee poison in its rind?
 I charge thee, brother, it is a fearful thing,
 Worthy of endless pity and disdain,
 To maim thy soul with fast and pinion her
 In solitude for ever. Love is great,
 His foemen will be broken at the end,
 His wheels are mighty. Titan, then arise,
 Touch with thy hand her bright hair suppliant;
 Raise her and fold around her thy great arms.
 Take thy delight upon her fruitful lips;
 So make her nature blossom with thy love,
 So bind her with strong influence wholly thine,
 So strengthen thee at the springs of her fresh life,
 Till thou wax more Titanic, and expand
 Thy lordly nature to new stateliness;
 Till thou redouble might, and scoff at fear,
 And the arch-father of thy fear above;
 Till thou, may be, in comfortable halls,
 No longer roaming under icy stars,
 Titan, in vengeance eating down thy heart;
 Or toiling on the sterile lands of storm,
 Knee-deep in ruins of the mountain cone,
 Or tumbled fields of pine; shalt warm at home
 Listen the light wail of the nurseling child,
 And hear the mother murmuring over it,
 With cradle-kisses broken, songs of sleep.
 And, if eternal conflict must prevail
 With thee and thine against the thunder-kings,
 Let us breed offspring, nobler yet than we,
 Sustaining sterner onset; to outpass
 Our deed in larger prowess; tear their thrones
 Away, as withered branches, out of heaven;
 Efface them, and rule calmly in their seat
 To teach man better comfort than their reign.

PROMETHEUS

The tune of thy word is anguish in my ear,
 The taste of thy persuasion bitter lees;
 Grievous to hear at wise lips idiot sound.
 Art thou too blinded of this subtle king?
 Hath he brought vapour on thy soul, and cloud
 Against thy reason? So some witless wren
 Trills with delight among the painted weed,

But overhead forgets the hawk at poise.
O tremble then, ye Titans, for your house :
I hear Zeus rouse his brothers to the field,
I see them smile as if they scented death,
I hear the grinding of their chariot-wheels.
They shall prevail, their hour is at the doors.
Yea, let them go and pluck bay-garlands soon,
Let glory clothe them ; they have smitten well ;
Prepare thy face, O Titan, for their heels,
Put down a patient neck for them to tread.
Ay me, the lordly race, so proud it was,
Totters before them ; scorn is rightly theirs,
Since no worm turns on earth against them now.
And, by my soul, this shall hereafter be,
If for one shining bauble thy heart fails,
If great resolve quails under eye-delight.
Thy blind confusions cloud my plainest word ;
Mine eyes as thine pronounce her beautiful ;
Lovely she is and true perchance may be.
But this "perchance" is a wide slippery word,
And in its foldings there are many deaths.
I will believe, a thing so pure with grace
Is in herself most clean of evil mind ;
She knows no death in each of her sweet hands.
Her could I love, if, over all, this stern
Supremest hate, whose eyelids vanquish sleep,
Held not its lidless watch to torture us.
If this prevail, lean mercy will be ours,
Exquisite hurting, and most cruel pain.
Therefore, who sets his face to cope with Zeus,
Hath slender hours of pastime, and lays by
Love that is born, as some soft flower in dreams,
The season lily of a wintry spring ;—
Must lay love by for ever and a day,
And childless gird him braver for the fight,
And wage securer onset ; if each child
Is a new wounding place that he must guard,
A new rift in his harness to defend
Against the subtle vengeance ; keen of eye ;
Finger on bow ; crouched snake-like ; arrows near.
He too, that would not bend to save himself,
Will crawl to save his children ; let me gain
A lonely glory or a childless fall.
Therefore, I do refuse her fair and true,
False or unfalse, resign her either way.
He, who has made her in his craft, may guide

Her darkened eyes in roads where is no light,
 Nor any song, but noise of smitten breasts,
 Wrung hands, tear-weeping, hiss and ache of woe.
 Is she not then his instrument and blind?
 As we could train her in all gracious ways,
 He will mislead her simple hands to harm,
 She guileless all the while. O brother, fear her ;
 Blind are her steps, her master terrible,
 And hungry with the famine of old hate
 To crush our race out in red fire and gloom.

CHORUS OF NYMPHS

A wild sweet star in amber folds of morn,
 A violet pale in fields of twisted tares ;
 The lovely queen Pandora, newly born,
 Leaving her native ether unawares
 And regions golden in celestial dawn,
 Descends refreshing nature ; as the rain
 In pale sward renders daisy faces plain,
 Earth at thy coming wakens all her rills,
 The fountain heads remurmur, the light wave
 At the vale mouth a sweeter tribute spills ;
 And, once sonorous under mountain cave,
 The many winds are dead and done away ;
 Or up in broken spaces of the hills,
 Among the ravens and the tumbled crags,
 Some breeze goes gentle as a child at play.
 The lowland rapid crisp with ruffled flags,
 The still tarn rippled by the marten's wing,
 The fleet unresting waters of the sea,
 Are shaken in the light of dædal spring.
 The shadows pass away because of thee,
 Pandora, crown of all created things.
 A large deep music gathers from the land ;
 The grey cliff-head, the burnished island spire
 Tremble in lucid haze as veins of fire.
 The pale waves spend their foam and push the sand,
 Furrow and whiten, shatter and retire.
 Thy loveliness is as the moon's command
 To sway them as she will and make them flow ;
 They are amazed at thy ethereal brow.
 The fear of thy bride-beauty, and the love
 That changes fear till fear grows strangely sweet,
 Make nature listen if thou dost but move,
 And thrill the meadow-grasses at thy feet.

The watery saffron, gentian, bloom of light,
The lilies of the moorland amber-eyed,
Sigh toward thee passing ; the dew-spider weaves
Weak webs to tangle thy bright steps aside.
The woodbine reaches ineffectual leaves.
Beautiful sister, let us come to thee ;
Fear not our worship, flee not, holy one,
Be thy sweet breath about us like the sea,
Be thy pure brow above us as the sun.
Be to us breath and ocean, light and spring,
Reward us only with thy presence, bring
Thyself, and be the deity of these ;
Rule us and love us, and there shall not cease,
O queen, thine adoration. Let thy hands
Be near us for our worship, and thy hair
Unfolded for our wonder ; as the sands
New washed of tide are coloured, when waves spare
Some of their liquid glowing as they go
To leave them bright a little. But thy brows
Have bound deep heavy sunlight on their snows
For a perpetual spoil. Thou dost not know
The stint and fluctuation of the tide ;
For thou art clothed with fair on every side ;
Thou art no cloud allowed one hour to glow.
Nay, for thy lord who stablished thee so sweet,
Hath put all change beneath thy perfect feet,
Hedged thee with honour excellent ; made Praise
A drudge to hew thee wood, and Love to watch and wait,
A slave beside a lute-string, to make thee easy ways
Of sleep, when pastime-wearied, and bondsman to thy state.
Yea, and thine eyes shall see meek Love beside thee,
And smile a little, as not over-glad,
Being too royal, with no joy denied thee,
Than to be otherwise than grandly sad.
As the gods laugh not over much, indeed
Why should they laugh, and what is worth their weeping?
Sweet youth fails not beneath them like a reed,
The shadow and the shine are in their keeping.
The large deep flows on under them, the cloud
Is strewn along their tables, and the light
Is broad about them, when the wind is loud ;
And the deep gates of sunset in their sight
Burn with the broken day. But these maintain
High state as always. Their hands reap and slay
Nor render any reason. They are fain
Because their rule cannot be put away ;

LOVE GROWN OLD

Because their arrows swerve not when they draw,
 Because their halls are winter-proof, their hate
 Mighty and fat with store of death, their law
 Shod with the iron permanence of fate.
 If they are vengeful, can they not revenge?
 Wrathful, allow their wrath its utmost way;
 Insatiate, can almost lust their fill;
 Listless, can drowse on tinted cloud all day,
 Lulled by the nations wailing as they pray?—
 Nay, let us break our song nor think on these.
 To thee this conflict, Titan, doth belong;
 We are but weak, as ineffectual seas
 That roll and spill their foam-lines all day long—
 She is as lovely, lord, as thou art strong.
 To us she cometh as some strange desire;
 As a bird's voice thro' silence in the night:
 As scent of oaken woods: or perfumed fire
 Floated among the pines in curling spire:
 The loosening of her ringlets is like light.
 Refresh thy lordly spirit at her lips.
 They shall renew thy soul with subtle power.
 Turn thee, O lord, to thy desired repose;
 Time hath made ripe for thee this perfect flower,
 And folded up her fragrance like a rose.
 Arise and take thy joy and dream no wrong;
 Who shall assail thee in thy mighty hall?
 Ours let it be to sing thy nuptial song,
 Until some beam auroral touch the trees,
 And wake thy palace with an ouzel's call;
 And in sweet hush the perfumed wing of morn
 Arrive on amber cloud and shaken breeze.

LOVE GROWN OLD

I CANNOT kiss thee as I used to kiss;
 Time who is lord of love must answer this.
 Shall I believe thine eyes are grown less sweet?
 Nay, but my life-blood fails on heavier feet.
 Time goes, old girl, time goes.

I cannot hold as once I held your hand;
 Youth is a tree whose leaves fall light as sand.
 Hast thou known many trees that shed them so?
 Ay me, sweetheart, I know, ay me, I know.
 Time goes, my bird, time goes.

I cannot love thee as I used to love.
 Age comes, and little Love takes flight above.
 If our eyes fail, have his the deeper glow?
 I do not know, sweetheart, I do not know.
 Time goes, old girl, time goes.

Why, the gold cloud grows leaden, as the eve
 Deepens, and one by one its glories leave.
 And, if you press me, dear, why this is so,
 That this is worth a tear is all I know.
 Time flows and rows and goes.

In that old day the subtle child-god came ;
 Meek were his eyelids, but his eyeballs flame,
 With sandals of desire his light feet shod,
 With eyes and breath of fire a perfect god
 He rose, my girl, he rose.

He went, my girl, and raised your hand and sighed,
 "Would that my spirit always could abide."
 And whispered "Go your ways, and play your day,
 Would I were god of time, but my brief sway
 Is briefer than a rose."

Old wife, old love, there is a something yet
 That makes amends, tho' all the glory set ;
 The after-love that holds thee trebly mine,
 Tho' thy lips fade, my dove, and we decline,
 And time, dear heart, still goes.

BE WISE IN TIME

DISPOSE thy loves in realms of mellow flowers ;
 Truth is not fooled to make his stay with thee.
 Thy faith is but the burnish of the hours,
 And Freedom is a nobler thing than love,
 So let me be
 Free as the cloud or river to remove.

Bud of the rose, with bright untruthful eyes,
 Time once thy slave shall be thy master soon,
 To quench the music of thy dove replies,
 Gentle as sleep : and jar to barren string
 The tender tune
 Thy lips could murmur like the gales of spring.

A MADRIGAL

Be not a siren throned upon the dust
 Of the dead victims of thy love desire.
 Exchange thy tinsel oaths for honest trust :
 Be rock not wave. For Fate has hoard of days
 To taint and tire
 The sweetest blossom of the meadow ways.

A MADRIGAL

LOVE GIVES ALL AWAY

"AND what is Love by nature?"
 My pretty true-love sighs.
 And I reply, in feature
 A child with pensive eyes,

An infant forehead shaded
 With many ringlet rings,
 And pearly shoulders faded
 In the colour of his wings.

His ways are those of children
 Who come to be caressed ;
 Or as a little wild wren,
 Who fears to leave her nest,—

He is shy ; if one shall beckon,
 He hides, will not obey ;
 He spends, and will not reckon,
 For Love gives all away.

He hoards to lavish only,
 And lives in miser way ;
 Now hermit-like is lonely,
 Now gallant-like is gay.

His palm is always tender ;
 His eyes are rainy grey.
 His wage-return is slender,
 For Love gives all away.

His aspect as he muses,
Is paler than the dead.
He weeps more when he loses,
Than he laughs when he is fed.

Love at a touch will falter,
Love at a nod will stay.
But armies cannot alter
One hair-breadth of his way.

He trembles at a rose-leaf,
And rushes on a spear.
A thorn-prick and he shows grief,
But Death he cannot fear.

The tyrant may not quench him,
He laughs at prison bars ;
The water-floods may drench him,
The fire may give him scars.

Though thou lay chain and fetter
On ankle, wrist, and hands,
He will not serve thee better,
But soar to unknown lands.

He follows shadow faces
Into grave-yards unawares.
He reaps in sterile places,
And brings home sheaves of tares.

One tear will heal his anger ;
He will wait and watch all day ;
He scoffs at toil and danger,
His last crust gives away.

He will strip off his raiment
To make his dear one gay,
And will laugh at any payment,
Having given all away.

When care his heart engages,
And his rose-leaf gathers grey,
He will claim a kiss for wages,
And demand a smile for pay.

A FROSTY DAY

A FROSTY DAY

GRASS afield wears silver thatch ;
 Palings all are edged with rime ;
 Frost-flowers pattern round the latch ;
 Cloud nor breeze dissolve the clime ;

When the waves are solid floor,
 And the clods are iron-bound,
 And the boughs are crystal'd hoar,
 And the red leaf nailed a-ground.

When the fieldfare's flight is slow,
 And a rosy vapour rim,
 Now the sun is small and low,
 Belts along the region dim.

When the ice-crack flies and flaws,
 Shore to shore, with thunder shock,
 Deeper than the evening daws,
 Clearer than the village clock.

When the rusty blackbird strips,
 Bunch by bunch, the coral thorn ;
 And the pale day-crescent dips,
 New to heaven, a slender horn.

DITHYRAMB

SUNBRIGHT ale is royal food,
 Jarring cups disloyal feud.
 I will cheer my soaking mood
 Till the orchards reel.

Brews good ale is no dispraise
 To our green or grizzled days ;
 He who sets his cheek in wine
 Vassals not despair.

He who sets his lips in ale
Keeps his legs where many fail,
Takes his fortunes at their best
Foul or fickle-fair.

Merry sets his mellow life,
Who, when rusty shocks are rife,
Whistles off his weary load
Wearing to each year.

Sours he not with friendship's treason,
Or some sweet love strange in season,
Ripe in manhood, ripe in heart,
Whole and sound and clear.

THE BIRD OF MY LOVE

THOU wilt not hearken, though I weep
Hot tears against thy folded hands ;
Though Love, this exile bird we keep,
Sits pining for his radiant lands ;
Sick of some tiny fleck or mote,
He never sings us now a single note.

He hangs his head, his eyelids close,
The gloss is faded on his wing ;
So broken down he seems with woes,
He may not pipe us anything.
I call ; his pale lips quiver loth ;
Is then his song all over for us both ?

Thy captive, his were early chains,
The noose was laid of woven hairs ;
Thy tame bird, he would count the grains
Thy pity gave him unawares.
He was bound in with golden bars,
Till he forgot the weather and the stars.

All day he saw thee near his cage ;
To watch thee, moving or in rest,
Became the poor bird's only wage ;
When thy hand fed him he was best.
He gave thee every note and trill,
And piped his little welcome with a will.

And so he sang till yesterday,—
Came to the bars with many a bend ;
His music made the old soft way,
Till sleep fell on him, and the end.
Laid in his sand now, cold and grey,
Interpret me his latest honey-lay.

I think he sang, "I am only thine,
I am broken if thou leavest me ;
I faint if thou art gone, divine,
This is no prison if near thee.
My heart floods out to thee in song,
And in thy smile my melody is strong."

"Take freedom, God's own gift on all,—
Remove Heaven's joy and leave me none ;
Take Light, Life's highest festival,
And leave me blind beneath the sun
To do thy bidding, sweet, all day :
Take all except thy dearest self away."

We kept him caged, and he is dead.
We did unwisely doing so :
Between his prison wires was shed
A meadow breath, which laid him low.
He loved thee much but pined unseen,
And brake his heart when woods grew tender green.

Love is thy cage-bird, like to die ;
He mopes, is weary, must begone ;
He finds no favour in thine eye,
Or answer in thine altered tone.
Thy god will pine as pined the bird,—
Each gave free heaven away for thy sweet word.

O changeful queen of many wiles,
Why lure and tend me for a whim,
And waste thy hundred pretty smiles
A season, till the love grows dim
Between thy rose lips unawares?
Fickle, they change. Unaltered I am theirs.

Doth all love end in weariness?
The music falters in his string ;
The arms grow faint in their caress,
Which bound me like a marriage ring.
What have I failed in then, my sweet,
That I must weep for pity at thy feet ?

At light offence Love opens wing,
For sorry reason he will go ;
At straws, which casual breezes fling
Against his feet, his angers glow.
In all my thought I cannot touch
One crime, save loving thee, my love, too much.

Bid me begone, but tell me why,
That I may mend what is amiss.
Love, I am patient ; earnestly
I will search out and alter this.
Reprove, and I will earn new praise,
Increasing due observance of Love's ways.

Thy frown is like a winter house,
Laid eastward in a bitter land ;
Whose roads are full of broken boughs,
And rough in ruts of snow and sand :
In white chains hangs the spider's woof,
Where keen winds freeze in ice-teeth at my roof.

There heaven is stayed from dew, and dry
The ice-sheet saws upon the reeds.
The wind is up with a wailing cry,
The deep has wrought and flung its weeds.
The blotted sun went long ago,
And the stained cliffs are keen in furrowed snow.

I have been weary with such days ;
 Let this grey change to rose again.
 Indeed, but it shall dim thy praise
 To leave me out in sweeping rain.
 My spring waits only thy command,
 The seasons of my soul are in thy hand.

The iron day declines. The flower
 Returns in seams of mountain grey ;
 Fresh leaves adorn the faded bower ;
 And Spring, who gave his lute away,
 Above blue bands of wintry night
 Arises in a fan of blinding light !

CARPE DIEM

TRUE love of the rosy cheek,
 You have played at hide and seek,
 Thro' the tender childish years
 That knew no dear unrest.

Light of light and love of love
 From your eyes as sunbeams move ;
 Sweet in laughter, sweet in tears,
 But your tears are best.

Cold at first and hardly kind,
 Fearing what you came to find ;
 New born fancies, half born fears,
 Longings ill-confessed.

Now the lover's suit is done,
 And the golden goal is won :
 What tho' weeping ripe, my girl,
 Smile thro' rainy eyes.

Be my goddess, be my prayer :
 Be my saint, serene and fair,
 Seated in a shrine of pearl
 Incensed by my sighs.

Love me : spring goes : every hour
 Beats out petals of life's flower.
 What, dear heart, if love be shed
 Under foot as soon ?

Shall the rolling month lay mute
 Honey word and tender suit ?
 Shall the discord of the dead
 Alter all love's tune ?

Ah, we know not ; but indeed
 It may sweeten true Love's need,
 Hearing near a phantom tread,
 Black in golden noon.

DAPHNE

THE floating Moon went down the tract of night ;
 The rosiness of sunset yellowed down
 Into a lighted argent at the roots
 Of the soft clouds that bore her. All day long
 In devious forest, grove, and fountain side
 The God had sought his Daphne. The sweet light
 Had left him in his searching, but desire
 Immortal held all slumber from his brain,
 And drave him like a restless dream among
 The pale and sylvan valleys. Here each branch
 Swayed with a glitter all its crowded leaves,
 And brushed the soft divine hair touching them
 In ruffled clusters, as Apollo strode
 Among the foliage.

Suddenly the Moon
 Smoothed herself out of vapour-drift, and made
 The deep night full of pleasure in the eye
 Of her sweet motion. Not alone she came
 Leading the starlight with her like a song ;
 And not a bud of all that undergrowth
 But crisped, and tingled out an ardent edge
 As the light steeped it ; over whose massed leaves
 The portals of illimitable sleep
 Faded in heaven. The chambers of the dawn
 Lay lordless yet, and, till the prime beam, grey.

As some cloud-vapour caught among the pines,
Alone in dim white shadow Phœbus went
To seek her : only on his lip and brows
Descended glory ; otherwise the God,
His noble limbs marbled in moonlight, came,
While on the crag-face infinite blue pines
Crowded the vales, and, seeming in the mist
Themselves as vapour, faded tier on tier.
And, as he wandered, from the lips divine
Came this complaining of the love-lorn God :—
“ Beautiful Daphne, eagle bird of the hills ;
O lovely Daphne, sleek and slender fawn ;
The wild bee hides her store among the rocks,
Thou hidest up thy beauty in these hills ;
Why in the wasting of the mountain side
Dost thou delight, my darling, still to cower
Behind grey boulders ? As the slender fern
Draws in its feathery tresses underneath
Some fountain slab, and trembles half the day
At each vale whisper. O my little neat
And twinkling mountain lizard, rustling in
Between the shadows, nestling a bright side ;
A moment shining out into the light,
Gone like a flash. My silent dove of the woods,
Thou fearest lest thy song reveal thy nest.
Thou tremblest as a dewdrop at my tread.
Is my glance deadly, and my love unkind ?
That thou wilt never set thy fugitive cheek
Against my lips an instant, till my breath
Revive thee ; till thy timid eyes look up
And smile unwilling love to my desire.
There is not any fear in loving ways ;
Be comforted, thou restless little one.
Let me approach thee, and thy life shall find
Its music ; and a sudden land of flowers
Shall lift itself around thee, fleecy-deep,
And veiling heaven out in exuberant
Curtains of bloom.”

“ Divine one, thy child days
Are gone, their pretty echoes broken all ;
More is the music of the hours that grow,
Clothed with sweet sound and mellow chords of fire ;
The lyric words are older than the gods,
Coeval with the fruitful patient earth,
Mother of many children. O my nymph,
I dwelt alone in glory, crowned with light ;

For thee I have forgot my radiant throne.
The cloudy plains are weary to my feet,
The nectar cup is bitter to my mouth ;
A god, I languish, broken with desire,
A king, I pine, bound of a mightier one.
Veiling my golden brows in earthly gloom,
Here, as a mist, I wander all night long,
Until the dawning with a gush of fire
Make blow the little winds and shake the meres."

RURAL EVENING

THE whip cracks on the plough-team's flank,
The thresher's flail beats duller.
The round of day has warmed a bank
Of cloud to primrose colour.

The dairy girls cry home the kine,
The kine in answer lowing ;
And rough-haired louts with sleepy shouts
Keep crows whence seed is growing.

The creaking wain, brushed through the lane
Hangs straws on hedges narrow ;
And smoothly cleaves the soughing plough,
And harsher grinds the harrow.

Comes, from the road-side inn caught up,
A brawl of crowded laughter,
Thro' falling brooks and cawing rooks
And a fiddle scrambling after.

THE POWER OF INTERVAL

A FAIR girl tripping out to meet her love,
Trimmed in her best, fresh as a clover bud.
An old crone leaning at an ember'd fire,
Short-breath'd in sighs and moaning to herself—
And all the interval of stealing years
To make that this, and one by one detach
Some excellent condition ; till Despair
Faint at the vision, sadly, fiercely blinds
Her burning eyes on her forgetful hands.

A RENUNCIATION

A RENUNCIATION

LIGHT of love and cold of brain,
Shall I trust thy tears,
Linking hand on hand again?
In untutor'd years,
Ah, but this was sweet.

Ripe lips are not venom-free,
Gentle eyes, nor virgin zone.
Thy snow-tint that dazzled me,
Snows that cover stone.
Peace, have done, 'tis well.

Light thy lamp of fen-fire love ;
There are fools will drown :
Me its ray shall never move ;
I have sat me down.
Let the times roll round.

Weary of thy glossy smile,
Sick of broken trust,
Shall I barter love for guile,
Pearl for painted dust?
I have done with thee.

Plough the rock and reap the sand,
Wear thy sickly smiles for gain,
Blight the lips that touch thy hand,
Till thy withered lips in vain
Lisp unheeded lies.

AURORA

By the primrose bank and meadow,
Rippling curls, rare feet in shadow,
Whither, sweet, away?
Listen, rise and follow lightly,
Wind the fluttering fingers tightly ;
Greet thee, love, to-day.

Young and lonely keep no measure.
Mint of youth is current treasure,
 Age but dross and scorn.
Many sweet mouths are not tasted,
Sweetest kisses won and wasted,
 Hour and year forsworn.

When the ripe hour whispers "reap,"
Turning towards that loveless sleep
 Who would sourly say,
Fresh cheeks wear not weeping stain.
Love is spoil, and wedded pain
 Taint their rose away !

Answer, love, "though love's best sweet,
Like an angel's glorious feet,
 Flash and pass no more,"—
Answer, sweet, "love may not last,
But the perfume of its past
 Lives in riper store."

Wavering sets the longest noon :
Winter crowns the fiercest June,
 Summer melts the snow.
Eyes can answer, hands as well,
Rusting years unlearn their spell :
 Answer, dearest, so—

Fortune plays not twice the giver :
Leave it once and lose it ever.
 As we speak 'tis flown.
Grasp it with no palsied hand,
Bend the years at thy command,
 Now and thrice thine own.

SLEEP AND SUNSET

WAIT—ay, the hours bring night and night brings morn
 The old wheel forces on the waning day.
Wait, till the pale to-morrow shall be born,
 As little gracious, and in turn decay.

Rest is a cloud above the evening sun

That sees him set, nor fails in steadfast sphere ;

Peace is a moon that when the stars are done

Without a twinkle sleeps upon a mere.

Death is the mother and the queen of Peace,

Against whose breast each little wayward child

Who never rested yet on alien knees,

Feels her his own and ere he slumbers smiles.

A PASTORAL

(VENETIAN SCHOOL)

ARCADIAN spaces of great grass arise ;

Crisp lambs are merry : hoary vales are laid,

Studded with roe-deer and wild strawberries ;

In one a shepherd tabours near a maid ;

Who teases at the button of his cloak,

Where rarely underneath them grows the herb ;

A squirrel eyes the lovers from an oak,

And speckled horses pasture without curb,

In a fair meadow set with tulip-heads.

A water-mill rolls little crested falls

Of olive torrent, broken in grey threads.

A grave-yard crowds black crosses in square walls.

And up behind in a still orchard close

The apples ripen, crushing down the trees,

In millions, russet-green and amber-rose,

Fit for the gardens of the Hesperides.

Such colour as the morning brings the skies,

Such mirage as our dreams in childhood gave,

Infinite cadence of ethereal dyes,

The radiance of a rainbow-burnished wave.

Quaint pastoral Arcadia, where are set

Thy rainy lands and reddish underwoods ?

Earth has not held thy fabled sunsets yet,]

Though lovers build their palace on thy roods.

REGRET

IF in this church-yard's crowded round
The letters on this simple stone
Seem common tale of burial ground,
Why pause so long before this one,

Bearing, you see, a maiden's name
And years that show she died when young?
A thousand grave-stones tell the same
In peace our rural vales among.

Shall I claim special emphasis
Of pain beyond my neighbour's share?
My love, and is it come to this,
Men say that I no longer care?

"So fails," they sneer, "this noisy woe
That would reprove our calmer grief.
He made us sick with all the show
Of his despair. He must be chief

"And lord above all grief before ;
His finer feelings, sole of men,
Could wring out sorrow to the core :
Such ostentatious tears, and then,

"He dries them soon enough ; behold,
He's much as others ; only, say,
From dulness now his manner's cold :
He always had a sullen way.

"He soon would wed, could one be found
To take her chance with him so grey,
But not a maid, the township round,
Would care to name the nuptial day."

Ay me, to vex my soul with lies.
The fools may cackle as they will ;
In every narrow huckster's eyes
Convention sways this planet still.

Thou seest clear at least, mine own,
Thou knowest, is my sorrow done?
So my thought reach thee near the throne
That lends his brightness to the sun.

My heart within me frets and burns
This mill-wheel round of time to bear.
My spirit from old habit turns
To where thou wert ; a void is there.

I take my laugh and bear a hand
In all the busy neighbours strive ;
Ah, could they come to understand,
The heart is dead, the man alive.

A dreamy life without a will,
I move as friends would have me go.
I hardly heed, if yonder hill
Be gentian-clad or crisp with snow.

Rock on through space, thou weary globe,
Let each month wake her sister flower.
Night is around me like a robe :
The throstle's song is harsh and sour.

I brood thro' all the light, and wait
Thro' all the darkness : wait ? for whom ?
I watch for something sure as fate :
I hear its footsteps near in gloom.

I know it comes and it will come.
Ay me, why must I watch so long ?
The slow clouds crumble, dome on dome,
And change their colours ; like a song

Note-changing ripples into new.
Would clouds dissolve, and show thy face
In chasms of eternal blue,
Ringed with the radiant morning's grace !

Thy face I cannot call at will,
But casual looks of mart and street
I can depict with faithful skill,
Tho' these I hardly know to greet.

As words lose meaning often said,
Confused thy gracious image lies
Too often dwelt upon. Instead,
A fragment cheats my longing eyes.

I've dried my tears, as gossips say ;
And shall be merry then, they know.
My trivial tears are done away,
Precursors to the deeper woe.

THE NYMPH'S PROTEST

WHY art thou fallen, sacred earthborn might,
Craft of the noblest, wherefore hast thou failed ?
The earthborn Titans fell ; and Nature's voice
In branch and cavern, reed and water sound,
Fell wailing in the new supremacy.
While he, the tyrant, in his glory-seat
Wiped the red death exultant from his blade,
And turned him to his golden rest again.

But a disdainful Atè-vengeance came,
And floated like a dream about his halls
On to the amber tables and the rest
Of that Elysian feasting ; as it neared,
His brother gods pushed back their goblet rims,
And shuddered by their wine with joyless eyes.
That presence with pale brows, impalpable,
Could brave them in their central citadel
Above the cloud-rack in the belted rose
And orange vapours, so that even gods
With livid lips sate loathing food divine.

But she, the curse of Atè, came not on
Near those soft-bosomed meadows, where the race
Of heroes in conclusion grandly calm
Eternally repose in ageless flowers.

O sister nymphs, our Titan sires are low.
They are smitten down beneath the tyrant's wheels.
They are chained throneless in the barren dark ;
Could our love raise them, could our worship send

THE DEFEAT OF GLORY

One, least of all these comfortable rays,
 That glide about the world and cherish it,
 To reach their prison places ! Could they hear
 So very far the voices of our love !
 Uncrowned, dishonoured, out of hope, dethroned,
 They are our gods or none.

Deck out thy heaven
 With rainbow gleams, thou tyrant ; build thy rest
 Securely : bid the scented asphodel
 Sweeten thy lands where winter slays no seed ;
 Make glorious all thy precinct floor with bloom.
 Thou canst not be the master of that fear,
 Coeval with thy reigning, which shall wound
 Thy feet on thorns amid the heavenly flowers.

THE DEFEAT OF GLORY

PORPHYRY beams dull-rosy in their light,
 With architraves of alabaster cold,
 And column-heads expanding into slight
 Long arabesques of intertwisting gold.

Around the ceiling runs the giant war ;
 And Jove in lurid halo : all his hand,
 Poising to hurl Enceladus afar,
 Red with the ruin of the Titan band.

So stately is the chamber, where a king,
 Feeble, in dim eclipse of human power,
 Lies with dull orbs or slowly widening
 Eyelids, to stare away the vacant hour.

O faded eyes untouched with royal light,
 Lean lips without desire of wine or bread ;
 O silent features folded with the night
 Wherein is no man's deed remembered.

Thy gold is changed to dross, thy rose to weed ;
 Thy raiment is the grave's sepulchral sheet :
 They push thee where no lute shall praise thy deed,
 They fold thy yellow hands and parchment face.

In silk and silver blue thy reign begins :
Thine end is sore ; and surely stricken worse
Than that goat limping to the sea of sins,
Sick with the burthen of a nation's curse.

And this disdain is fallen to thy last days,—
Who wast alone for glory, with thy throne
Built as a rock in sides of pleasant ways—
That all men tire of thee and wish thee gone.

Therefore, I hold the dead are more than kings :
They are not cold or hungry or dismayed.
They dwell together where no morning springs,
They waken to no toil ; and are not paid

At even-tide with wage. No maiden's word
Hath given them mirth. At no lord's yoke they weep.
The song of love their silence never heard.
Their feet are tangled in deep nets of sleep.

God hath discarded them as broken things ;
They shall not hear, descending from his throne,
Some angel with great amber sweep of wings.
He hath chidden them out as objects from his own.

Yea, earth is weary that they were at all,
And hides them deep in some neglected place ;
Where pale grass hangs above them like a pall,
And ivy splits the escutcheons of their race.

Therefore, old king, thy bed shall be sevenfold
More bitter, strewn with theirs ; because thou must
For all thy beaming gates and treasure hold
Gain at God's hand some inches of red dust.

Yea, as dry boughs of some dismembered tree,
Numb from thy nape to thy heels buskin-shod,
Thy shrouded limbs and side-bound hands shall be
Crushed down in darkness from the face of God.

Yea, that white fluttered seraph choir of his
Hate thy lean bones as terrors ; ay, they dread
To unbind the banded jaws, and eye-places
Where the balls wither inward at the head.

And, ere this come, such toil of heavy breath,
By this old royal phantom, runs to worse
Than yon gaunt image of sepulchral death.
Life is a garment burning like a curse,

When weary pulses flicker with disease,
And Pain draws Reason tortured from his seat :
To anguish and an age of maladies
Is not the grave a rest supremely sweet ?

Better to sleep in barrows, where young lambs
Feed and repose in daisies o'er the dead ;
Where, moving with a chime of necks, their dams
Graze round the belfry silent overhead.

Where in among the fleeces of the sheep,
Like small and burnished rooks, the starlings call,
Between black crosses in the field of sleep,
And make the mild spring weather musical.

Leave this bright dream ; return, with bated breath,
Enter the shrouded palace where he lies ;
Say, can the splendid precinct of his death
Like one field daisy soothe thine aching eyes,

Sick with all human artifice of gold ?
The need of nature deepens in a breast
That, having laid its dead in hallowed mould,
Loathing at fame, finds nature comfort best.

All things are doomed and alter from their birth.
Man sighs at eve, who rose at morn to sing.
Gaze on this couch, and answer ; is it worth
A loaf, a leaf, one feather to be king ?

Sour Æsculapian vultures o'er thee stoop,
And heirs with greedy eyes peruse thy bed.
And itching fingers feel each signet hoop,
And eager chins examine, " Is he dead ? "

He is not dead, if one lean lifted hand
Redeem him from thy nations, king of sleep—
As some brown sea-weed on the margin strand,
Torn from the inmost gardens of the deep,

Attains with earthly flowers no root or rest,
But lies and festers among sand and surge ;
The hollow breakers hither heave and crest,
There haggard darnels taste the east wind's scourge.

Life in blue armour, crowned with ardent hair,
Hath scorned this outworn wreck of human breath,
And flung him forth beyond her temple stair
To wait the rising of the floods of death.

He is dying out, tho' under stately fanes
The arch-priest wrestles for his monarch still,
In organ-litanies ; he is faint and wanes ;
He is meaner than the lizard on the hill,

Who sniffs the early air with lithe grey throat.
Whose wild eyes taste the increase of the morn,
What time her olive interspaces float
In veins of ardent amber newly born.

God folds away his night and calls the red :
The creeping thing hath pleasure in his deed.
In these dim eyes, where reason's light is dead,
The rosebud is one colour with the reed.

Mock him with sounding pomp no more. In vain
Number to him the nations, where he is
By name as god incarnate. Ah, refrain
The irony of bending knees to *this* !

The weary sunbeams crawl themselves away.
The walls are laned with shadow in the moon.
He is almost gone each turn of night and day,
He wanes from swoon to sleep, from sleep to swoon.

And scribes are busy in great parchment scrolls
To set his acts and annals chronicled ;
And paint large letters all along the rolls,
Gold for his glory, for his warfare red.

In the sun-death raught his empire bounds ;
Far to his footstool from the dawning place
Came orient kings to watch his eyes, as hounds
Who whimper chidden before a master's face.

To the firm west he flung a blast of war,
On the light east he strengthened his array ;
" All men are foes, who yet unconquered are,
My faulchion holds a rebel world at bay."

He cried, almighty in his silver hall ;
Peace knew his smile, his frown concluded death.
At his approach the watch-tower on the wall
Trembled, the rampart melted at his breath.

In virgin waves his mariners held oars,
His merchants traded in secluded fairs.
Strange Triton gods beheld thro' temple doors
His sails, as floated sea-birds, unawares.

His multitude of rowing sailors sate
Strong-handed at their benches. The black deep
In bitter furrow hoarse against them. Fate
Ready to overwhelm them in each water-heap.

Yet in the teeth of death with wrist and arm
They pushed a passage on. The blind wind died
Vexed at their masterdom. The surf ran calm,
Or washed faint edges on the galley's side.

Till where the hungry deep wrought yesterday
Are laid its morsels : violet water-shells,
And starry orange creatures of the spray,
And leathery bladder-weeds with egg-like cells ;

And washed mosaics out of wave-worn floors,
And limpet shells unanchored from rock-root,
With small dried rearing horseheads of the shore,
By prickly balls of sea like chestnut fruit ;

And drifts of nether ocean rough in thorn—
All sea-wrack wafted harvest, lord, for thee.
The villagers gleaned coral-branches torn
In far deeps from the rosy mother tree.

They sought sweet calamus in reedy wands,
And capes with spice-trees under their ravines ;
And orchard havens up in austere lands
To bring choice berries to delight thy queens.

Strange oil they brought thee from no olive tree ;
Where float the frozen islands thou didst man
Thy boats to row Cimmerian glooms of sea,
And fling the barb against leviathan.

And from secluded gardens of the east,
They found thee singing children, blue at eyes,
Bright as the rain is, beautiful ; the least
Among them worth a city's ransom price.

They bought sleek girls with silver to thy will,
And thou didst take thy joy with each of these.
Their voices were as some low chiming rill,
Their stature as a hedge of almond trees.

And red-grey fisher cities, terraced in
With bushes on some broken headland's face,
Drew down each dawn their grating keels to win
The shell reserved for princes and their race.

So thou didst bathe thy mantle in its dyes ;
The bearded murex for thy purple bled :
Thou satest sanguine as the morning skies,
With bands of burning jewels on thy head.

So some were almost slain to gaze on thee
In thy full royalty and glory seat.
Strong men, in spirit melting utterly,
Beheld with failing knees and feeble feet.

So like a moon thy soul shone lifted up,
By reason of thy worship, and it said,—
“The incense of a world perfumes my cup,
The wheat of empires ambers for my bread.”

“God hath set morning lights for me in heaven
To quicken my uprising ; he unbinds
The sweet rain in my homage : mine the seven
Great northern stars, mine the four region winds.

“I yoke all nations on my wagon wheel ;
All fruit of earth is mine ; all bales as well
The strong ships carry ; all thou dost conceal
Their grey gigantic sea unsearchable.

"All toil and increase to my feet are brought ;
My palace is a cage, where each delight
Dwells ; as a bright bird hunted down and caught
To sleek her pretty feathers in my sight.

"Against the ruddy lamp of my renown,
As some great Pharos light in stormy heaven,
The lesser princedoms shatter wildly blown,
And rend their helmless realms, as foam is riven."

"I am set for God, to rivet or unwind,
To establish or remove at my decree.
I alter and abolish, break or bind ;
Shall any power perplex my deity ?

"I am for ever ; no decay makes wan
The eternal crown that gleams against my brow.
Death is my bondsman, Pain my wage-woman,
Age is at league with me." Behold thee now !

THE ISLAND OF CIRCE

THIS is her island squared in cypress lines ;
With cedar ranks about her alley walks
Set frequent, and the faces of their boles
Are crimson, deep as sunset stains of cloud.
The floor between them, rank and overgrown,
Is tangled with luxuriant heads of bloom,
All in a mat together, mixed with sedge.
There are the bells of some wide wine-deep flowers,
Great apple fruits and tawny orange globes ;
And bunchy cactus tipped in fire-bright buds,
Grey aloe spikes and heavy curling vines,
And speckled poison berries intertwined.
Her groves lead down upon the light free waves ;
Here foam-heads dance and ripple into sound.
The laughter of many birds is in her elms,
Jays, owls, sea-crows, larks, lapwings, nightingales,
As jumbled as the flowers beneath their notes.

The Isle-grove ends abruptly on the sea,
A stranded star-fish neighbours by the sward,
Where the snail toils beneath his painted walls.
Small seaward gusts irresolute breathe near ;
And sweeter waftings, sent from middle brine,
Stir the deep grasses at her perfect feet,
Where Circe, shining down the gaudy flowers,
Leans centre-light of all this paradise.
One ankle gleams against the margin turf,
Just beyond where the wave-teeth cease to bite.
And sea-pinks grow less rosy near her feet.

But this enchantress, island-queen, herself
Bears on her head a bright tire marvellous,
And for a girdle one of many dyes
Woven and traced with curious pattern-spells.
Her face is not at first so beautiful,
That one should say, " Fear her, she will slay men
And draw them into deaths by her strange ways,
And some soft snare hid under all of her."
We must consider well upon her face,
And then the silent beauty of it all
Begins upon us, grows and greatens on,
Like sweet increasing music, chord on chord,
Till all our being falters overthrown ;
And she lures out our soul into her hands,
As faint and helpless as a new-born babe,
To have her way and will with all of it.

O, she, this Circe mage, is strange and great,
And deadlier than those terrible bright forms,
That beam out on us obviously divine,
And at a flash content us with their grace.
Her love eats deeper to the core of men,
Scathing and killing, fierce and unappeased ;
Until not only the divine in us,
But all the human also (which indeed
Are one, tho' this less perfect) fade and change,
And fall corrupted into alien forms.
Till we resemble those strange-headed things,
Herded away behind her island throne,
Chimæras, tiger-apes, and wolfish swine.

ECHO, CLOUD, AND BREEZE

ECHO, hast thou heard my love go by,
 Did thy mimic voice to hers reply
 From the grey cliffs of thy rocky nest?
 Streamlets tinkle at her rosy feet,
 Fountains dimple back her glancing sweet,
 Daisies whisper, "take us to thy breast."

Idle cloudlet brooding near the sun,
 Float and touch the hill-crowns one by one.
 Tell me, is she here or is she there?
 Bend thy melting eyes on slope and rock,
 Seek her thro' the heaths, the climbing flock,
 Never hast thou sought a thing so fair.

Breeze, that falling catchest on the mere,
 Swallow-like to ruffle there and here
 Freckling silver on the smooth dark creek,
 Hast thou felt the flutter of her gown,
 Caught aside one little ringlet brown,
 Tasted, passing, at the dainty cheek?

Dear, without thee all the land is bare :
 Love, beside thee heaven itself is there :
 Life and Love sit crowned in golden ease.
 Death is gone for ever and a day,
 Lovers walk in one perpetual May :
 Soft winds whisper in ambrosial trees.

THE CHILDREN OF THE GODS

*Und meiden, im enkel
 Die eh'mals geliebten
 Still redenden züge
 Des Ahnherrn zu sehn.*

Iphigenia. GOETHE.

THE rulers of Olympus owe no bond
 Of earthly kindred : in their cloudy state
 They see the wrong and anguish of their sons,
 And turn the brilliance of their eyes away.

Is it in nature that a mother's soul
 Forgets the child she held upon her breast?
 Can love to that same helpless little one
 Be utterly abolished, when the years
 Have made the fibres of those strengthless hands
 Strong with the spear? Is human love so vile,
 Ye gods, that ye despise it? Do you shrink,
 Immortal fathers, by the cradle-head
 To see your mighty likeness, as a babe,
 Renewed in features of the helpless years?
 Is there reproach in that small wailing voice
 To dash the high reserve of majesty
 To mere emotion? And these children grow
 To men with record of the godlike eyes,
 And something better than the common breed.
 But can the father in his amber halls
 Retain one dim least instinct towards his own,
 To let them reap and hustle with the herd?
 Is winter's interval less rough to these,
 The god-begotten? Doth the sour ice rain
 Flood by their vineyard scatheless? Drought and dust
 Vex them and vex their works, as other men's.
 But those inexorable listless sires
 Move round their drowsy eyes in much disdain
 Of earthward care and all vicissitude.
 They see the setting and the rising stars:
 The storm is like a distant waterfall:
 Except they listen, this they will not hear:
 Except they will, they need not watch its wings;
 That far, far down, one blot of violet shower,
 Move on the terraced islands, edged in foam,
 Green bays of earth and patches of grey sea.

They slumber in their careless citadel.
 The centuries are gathered in their homes
 Beneath them, ancients of an ageless dawn:
 The strength and beauty of impregnable
 Pavilions are their haven in a calm,
 Deeper than silence,avenued in stars.
 They will not raise a hand for any woe.
 The pestilence and agonies of earth
 Dare not invade the porches of their rest:
 Only the sudden glory of a dream
 Plays on the stern lip-corners like a light,
 Nor turns them in their slumber on the cloud.

Infirm am I to dream that bond or blood,
 Justice or love, as tender-minded men
 Use them and die, are anything to these.
 Not these it angers, that their sons have worn
 Their feature in disasters infinite,
 Debasing god-resemblance fallen low
 With stain of earth ; as one a captive king
 Slaves in his royal garment 'fray'd and old.

Compassion scales not to that terrible land,
 If the sons perish wailing, with a gleam
 Of the cold sun-dawn on their rigid face.
 They raise a heavenward arm : it falls : and dust
 Is in their fingers : answers thus the sire :
 Those lips can name their father now no more.

These gods it moves not, that the cheeks grow old
 Which in their bloom drew down immortal lips
 To taste them, sweet as anything above
 The cloud : gods changed the long monotony,
 Eonian calm, and irksome eminence
 For pastime : leaving desolate in heaven
 Their Herès for the daughter of a day.
 They scorned their empty thrones and passionless heights,
 Weary of isolation due to gods,
 To bathe in that strange river of desire :
 Which flows not from Olympus' girth of snow,
 But skirts the lowland precincts of the race,
 That knows no certain morrow, cheering these.

There is no memory in omnipotence.
 They change their love-dreams as the meadows change
 Their raiment month by month. The hireling slave
 Mates with a bondsmaid longer. Human love
 Of meaner creatures is a nobler thing.
 But these, when love is sated, make an end
 And crush remembrance, like an evil snake,
 That stings them in the asphodels of heaven ;
 Where nothing comes, save that which fosters up
 Eternal sense of self-sufficiency,
 Careless of past, of forward days secure.

The earthly sons of these in narrow homes
 By margins of the solitary seas
 Give glory to their fathers, if the earth
 Ripens the seed, or rounds the grape to wine,

That they may mingle them a little cup,
Or sheaf the threshold of the marsh for bread ;
And breed in turn new offspring, handing down
The record of their lineage, bitterly
Remembered in the dim degenerate days ;
Or serving as an ancient lullaby
To rock the cradles of an alien race.

The generations pass, the gods abide.
The beauty and perfections of the earth
Are due to silence in a little while.
And other things displace them fair as these.
The hearth is broken where the children played :
The gradual wave is eating at the land,
The gradual river shallows up the sea.
The mounds are garnered with the bones of men.
We creep to silence : but the eternal earth,
With all her gods about her, evermore
Sleeps into night and wakens into dawn.

FUGACES ANNI

O MY love, my Queen of May,
The light of youth is gone.
Thy balmy tresses gather grey,
Thy rosy lips are wan.
Will thy true eyes alter yet,
And their nuptial smile forget ?

O my love, will Time deceive,
Will he wither true Love so ?
There is more in Love, believe,
Than the silly nations know ;
More in Love, when bloom is dead,
Than the rose-wreath round his head.

O my love, and if thou need
Harbour when the north winds blow :
If thy tender footprints bleed
On the flints among the snow :
Love will raise a sheltered cot,
Where the ice-blast enters not.

O my true-love, we are wise ;
 When snow whitens all our land,
 Underneath the cloudy skies
 We will travel hand in hand :
 Since we have not far to go
 To our rest beyond the snow.

THE PRODIGAL .

(AFTER ALBERT DURER)

IN a strange country, father, most forlorn,
 Broken with sin : for many idle days
 Crowned with a chaplet of the Devil's bays :
 My food the husks of swine, my raiment torn,

I drive my weltering flock in mire at morn
 To pasture acorns on the forest ways.
 Alone with droning owls and bickering jays,
 I herd my hogs and wind my herdsman's horn.

The servants in thy house are clothed and fed,
 Nourished with meat and strong with purple wine.
 Make me thy servant : feed me lest I die.

Naked I perish for a crust of bread,
 Ragged I kneel among the troughs of swine.
 Out of thy far land hear my abject cry !

AUGURIES OF MAY

FLOWER upon flower expands :
 May reigns in hawthorn lands.
 Gone are the saffron daughters of the snow.
 Sweet Summer tells her son
 The daffodils are done :
 Spring takes his mother by the hand to go.

The sedge wren tells her note,
Dim larks in ether float,
The uprolled clouds sustain their pageant dome.
In velvet, sunshine-fed,
Spires up the bulrush head,
Where rock the wild swans in their reedy home.

The lily pale and wan
Puts all her glories on :
Her silver mantle and her golden crest.
The humbler violets stand
Her ladies at command,
As she attires in lawn her ivory breast.

The bland and balmy rain
Revives the vernal plain.
The vale remurmurs as its kisses burn.
As some fair girl replies
With answering lips and eyes
To greet with love her welcome love's return.

And on the rippling tide
Sail-crowded galleons ride.
The heron flaps his heavy wings, and cries
Hoarse in the cloudy rack.
The faithful cranes sail back
To some old belfry in Teutonic skies.

The incense-laden trees
Perfume the vocal breeze,
This to the hurrying bee of honey sings.
And chequered butterflies,
Like beams of orient skies,
Expand the painted rainbows on their wings.

Summer eternal, born
From year to year, as morn
Is born from day to day—reviving glows :
Her breath the scented gale,
Her voice the nightingale,
Her form incarnate in the queenly rose.

Summer, whose power confessed
Instils each maiden's breast
With such strange yearning as the red buds know :
When in their bosoms sweet
With unaccustomed feet
Love walks among the silence and the snow.

Summer, who dyes the meek
And happy maiden's cheek,
With the new blushes of her wild wood rose.
Who steeps her lips anew
In Love's ambrosial dew,
And fills her fancy with delicious woes.

In old days far away,
In sacrifice to May,
Their crisp white lambs the sullen Flamens brought.
Grim Pontiffs in a ring
For auguries of spring
In flight of bird or bleeding victim sought.

We need no chanted prayer
To tell us May is there,
A risen Venus from the wintry brine :
Whose sacrifice is still
Each gentle maiden's will,
And in the lover's veins her altar wine.

ECHOES OF HELLAS

O CHOIR of Tempe mute these many years,
O fountain lutes of lyric Hippocrene,
On whose polluted brink no Muse is seen.
No more, between the gleaming vales, one hears

Apollo's footfall or the sobbing tears
Of Daphne budding finger-tips of green.
No nymphs are bathing with their huntress Queen
In the warm shallows of the mountain meres,

Great Pan is dead : he perished long ago :
His reedy pipes these uplands never heard.
What trembling sounds from yonder coppice come ?

Some ravished queen, who tells the dale her woe ?
Nay, since the maids Pierian here are dumb,
The nightingale is nothing but a bird.

THE SAINT AND THE SUN

I HEARD a Saint cry to the Sun—" Be dim.
Why shouldst thou rule on high with boastful ray,
Till fools adore thee as the God of Day,
Robbing thy master's honour due to him ?"
But the sun-spirit, thro' each radiant limb
Translucent as a living ember coal,
Glowed. At the anger of the seraph soul
His golden orb trembled from boss to rim.

Then made he answer as a dove that sings,
" God's glory is my glory, and my praise
Only his praising. They, who kneel to me,
See thro' the waving of my orient wings
A choir of stars with voices like the sea,
Singing hosanna in the heavenly ways."

AN IDYLL

THE time of pleasant fancies,
For lass and lad returns
In velvet on the pansies,
In little rolled-up ferns.

Spring comes and sighs and listens
For the flute of nuptial bird :
Her primrose mantle glistens,
But her footfall is not heard.

She hides in wild-wood places
To watch the young herb grow :
And on the hyacinth faces
She writes the word of woe.

And when the year is younger,
And oak leaves yet are small :
And nestlings gape in hunger,
And merry crow-boys call :

And on the purple fallows
The greedy rooks are swaying ;
And, as the morning mellows
The wenches pass a-maying.

And, as in clouds of roses,
The orchard breadths expand ;
The chestnut leaf uncloses
The fingers round its hand.

In glades and groves of beeches
The pensive lovers rest :
With sighs, in broken speeches,
Their passion is confessed.

In silence and emotion
They give themselves away,
To sail Love's restless ocean
For ever and a day.

For ever and for ever
They vow, for many a year,
When leaves are young : they sever
When leaves are turning sere.

Ay me, that Love is faded !
Heigho, the leaves rush down.
They kissed, in greenwood shaded,
They part ere woods are brown.

Time, as a boding raven,
Sails o'er them in his flight :
And on their fairy haven,
His wing drops dews of blight.

Their morning star was kindled,
And rode as high as God.
Their evening lamp has dwindled
To a glow-worm in the sod.

Spring ends, and Love is ended :
His lute has lost its tone.
And the cadence, once so splendid,
Dies in a wailing moan.

AN INVOCATION

AN invocation for the queenly one,
The ruler of my days and my desire :
A burning incense to my radiant sun,
A music mounting in a shaft of fire :

An adoration and a sacrifice,
An aureole outrayed upon her brow,
As in a silver saint of Paradise :
A pearly necklace round a throat of snow—

Turn not the splendour of thine eyes aside;
Though night and all her shadows are deceased
Thy glance is as the morning's to divide
The pillared chambers of the glowing east.

The clear blue heaven returns in all my soul
Dim cloud and dense forebodings haste away :
I fear no hidden rock, no ragged shoal,
I ride at anchor in a glassy bay.

My life is as a wood, where owls and jays
Hoot in the heavy boughs, and magpies rail,
Till I am weary. Then, beyond all praise,
I hear thy rapture, O my nightingale.

My life is as a lonely woodland mere,
Whose sullen waters without sun repose :
And thou one ivory lily floating here,
Marble and white, flushed with a hint of rose.

THE SPIRIT OF EVEN

Thou art the silence of a mighty sea,
 Thou art the tempest cleaving night with fire :
 Thou art the fragrance of all spring to me,—
 Mine, fated mine, as mine in my desire.

Before the world was builded, thou wert mine,
 Before the seas were laid, Fate drew thee dumb
 Out of the void abyss : my soul to thine,
 Thro' myriad leagues of awful space has come.—

Swing up the golden censer, acolyte,
 Let fumes of stately frankincense arise,
 As Pæan to my beautiful Delight,
 And mingle cloud-like with the cloudy skies.

I breathe but in thy breath ; and, this withdrawn,
 My swan-like music dies upon its wing :
 But smile upon me like incarnate Dawn,
 And then this Memnon, mute before, can sing.

THE SPIRIT OF EVEN

GENTLE Queen, that dost control
 Kingdoms pale of faded light :
 Spheréd star, that ridest sole
 In between the day and night.
 Silver-pulsing, planet queen,
 Wrapt in robes of twilight sheen.

Loose the ox and lengthen shadows :
 Hive again the roving bee :
 Still the lark o'er emerald meadows :
 Bring the fishers home from sea :
 Spirit of the Eve unseen,
 Shed thy influence, twilight Queen.

Shepherd, pipe thy plaintive lays,
 Crown her brows with radiant mist :
 On her throne of purple rays
 Seat her like an amethyst :
 Beaming glow-worm, amber-green,
 Fair and lovely twilight Queen.

Smite, O smite the chorded lyre,
All things praise her peaceful sway.
Poet, wake thy heart of fire,
Ere her beauty waste away,
Pass unsung and fade unseen,
Pearl of Even, twilight Queen.

ODE TO FORTUNE

DEMON or goddess, who dost sway
The changes of our mortal state :
Before whose footstep fades away,
As snow, the grandeur of the great.

To some thou bringest health and fame,
A happy love, a faithful friend,
To some the dungeon-doors of shame,
Gibbet and rope, a felon's end.

Thou art almighty in thy might,
Heaven fades before thy fiery breath.
The giant planets of the night
Fall, if thy hand decree their death.

Wisdom is but a little child,
Before the breath of thy command :
And Virtue, broken and beguiled,
Rests in the hollow of thy hand.

O'er heaven and ocean, crag and vale,
Thou waftest thy triumphant wings ;
Thou soarest on the golden gale
With incense from an hundred springs.

Thou canst unlock the secret deep,
And rend aside the mountain range ;
And, as the spheres thro' ether sweep,
Thou rollest round thy orb of change.

No bourn, no limit of delay,
No rest thy alternations know ;
We quail before thy dreadful way,
And at thy thunder step bend low.

Thy deep eyes search the years unborn,
And mock the present with disdain ;
And measure with a smile of scorn
Each sceptred tyrant's fleeting reign.

How brief a record can they save,
If only in some marble bust
Survive those features, which the grave
Has crumbled to a pinch of dust.

And these white ashes of an urn
Once made a chidden world afraid ;
But Queens to common dust return,
And Kings of glory quickly fade.

So when proud Egypt in her fleet
Beat up, with canvas all unfurled,
Inflamed with Mareotic heat,
To wreck the realm and clutch the world :

Drunk with the wine of prosperous hours,
Insane to hope the wildest good,
She, queenly crowned with lotus flowers,
Swept silken-sailed across the flood :

Came with mosquito nets, and came
With eunuchs, a decrepit band,
While, doting at her apron, tame
The great triumvir gave command.

But when she saw her burning ships,
And heard the roaring of the fire,
The wanton paled her painted lips,
And fled the falcon Cæsar's ire.

The destiny of Rome, of man,
Hung trembling on that awful day,
The ages and their coming plan
Were mapped in that Ambracian bay.

There, Fortune, calm on Actian height,
Above the hurtling prows and sails,
Sat arbitress to watch the fight,
And weigh the world in battle scales.

And, when the haughty Rome was done,
She rolled her Goths in thunder down,
Thro' ice-blue vales she called the Hun,
She gave him Cæsar's empty crown.

Dread Deity, supremely fair,
Daughter of heaven, serenely strong,
Smile on us, firstborn of despair,
Give respite to our ancient wrong.

The nations narrow and expand,
As tides that ebb, or tides that flow.
Their bounds and borders fear thy hand ;
It rears them high or wrecks them low.

All men thy intercession crave ;
The happy lovers newly wed,
The widow bending o'er a grave,
The mother o'er a cradled head.

They perish as a robe outworn,
As faded leaves they float away :
But in the prime where thou wert born,
A hundred years are but a day.

Thou scatterest them like shade or sleep,
Thou slayest them and they are slain :
Anon, thou callest o'er the deep,
"Children of silence, come again."

As oxen that to slaughter reel,
Thou drivest nations with thy goad ;
They are as flies upon thy wheel,
They are as pebbles in thy road :

As emmets, who have lost their way,
Between the ant-hill and the sheaf :
As coral insects in a bay,
That weave their little inch of reef :

We last but while the day is new ;
The thirsty sunbeam dries us up.
Have mercy ! we are drops of dew
Shed for a moment in thy cup.

ORPHEUS IN HADES

ORPHEUS, HAVING DESCENDED TO THE NETHER WORLD
IN SEARCH OF EURYDICE, THUS ADDRESSES PRO-
SERPINE

RULER and agent, to whose dread domain
The mighty flood of life and human woe
Sends down the immeasurable drift of souls,
As silted sands are rolled to Neptune's deep,
I, even I, approach your awful realms,
Queen of oblivion, lady of Acheron,
To crave one captive. I alive descend,
A live man nourished still on human bread,
A man with limbs of flesh and veins of blood,
What right have I to tread the cheerless field
Of the eternal exile? What despair
Hath made me undertake so dire a road ;
A chasm, in whose mouth the tumbled crags,
Tumbled and jumbled, as in Titan wars,
Lie fragmented in horror, block on block,
Torn and enormous boulders. On through these
Undaunted down I went. I wished to die.
I held my poor life cheaply in one hand,
Cheaply and loosely, as a fluttering bird,
Whom any onward step may grant escape ;
And, at the base of the abyss, behold,
A level platform and an unknown land.
And at this point the ghostly realm begins,
And I had done with light and done with men,
And the sweet sun was quenched and far away.

Soon, soon I saw the spectral vanguard come,
Coasting along, as swallows, beating low
Before a hint of rain. In buoyant air,
Circling they poise, and hardly move the wing,
And rather float than fly. Then other spirits,
Shrill and more fierce, came wailing down the gale ;
As plaintive plovers come with swoop and scream
To lure our footsteps from their furrowy nest,
So these, as lapwing guardians, sailed and swung
To save the secrets of their gloomy lair,
And waved me back, impeding my advance.

Yet I persisted, tho' my veins ran cold
To catch the winnowing of their awful wings,
And feel the sweat-drops of their ghostly flight
Drip on my neck and shoulder from above,
As ice-flakes from the mantle of some cloud
That overpasses, bearing in its breast
A core of thunder and the seeds of hail.
Ye spectral bats, with latticed cobweb sails,
Shall I, around whose cradle Muses sang,
Quail at your emanations weak as rain?
As mist I cleave your ineffectual files,
Love shall not shudder at your goblin eyes.
Yet have I weathered direr dread than these,
In winding from the frontier of thy realm,
Here to thy throne-step and thy sceptred seat,
A piteous interval, a roadway grim,
And avenued with horrors ; thick as when
The Arcadian peasant plants the frequent stem
Of rough-leaved, bramble-fruited mulberries,
Ranked on the causeways of the dusty roads
To feed the worm who weaves the stoles of queens.

Thus on each hand has peril fringed my path,
Under the strong wing of the rose-wreathed god :
Peril of waters, peril of the dunes,
The marsh, the fog, the whirlwind, and the fire,
Malignant shores with reason-blasting sights,
And the dim dungeons of the eternal curse
I traversed, and in arduous passage scaled.
Love, orb'd in iris halo, step by step,
Went with me, mighty Love, who tunes my lyre :
Unseen he went, and breathed into my ear
The consolations of his nectared lips,
And on the utter edge of horror gave
A whisper from the fair Thessalian fields,
A hint of rosebuds ripe in crystal dew,
And the clear morning summits poised above
The belt of vineyards and the zone of pines.

I, fed with vision, held securely on,
Nor heeded half the execrable sights
Which ripen in the forest of despair :
The thorn-encircled stem of human woe,
The leaves of agony's expanded rose
With glowing petals and a fiery heart.

Under the shelter of my master's plumes,
I did not turn my feet from any dread,
I took the woes full-breasted as they came ;
Then suddenly the dolorous thicket ceased,
And all the wailing of its woods retired,
Like voices of some dreadful nightingale.
And at my feet a turbid river came.

I knew the stream, I knew the flaccid roll
Of those accursed waves : sighing it ran.
Lethe thou art and worthy of thy name.
Will Love sustain me through this bitter flood,
Where all things are forgot? Maybe these waves
Will wash away my sorrow. On, faint heart,
And bear me up, sweet Love, and guide me through.
And out I waded through the curdled wave
To the mid-channel : girdle-deep it grew.
Loathing I went, from waist to knee in wave,
From knee to heel in slime ; I moved as one
In heavy chains advancing to his doom.
But Eros found a ford and pushed me through ;
And whispered, " Fear not—see, it shallows now."
And when I found the hateful waves subside,
And saw the nearness of the further shore,
My heart rejoiced. I cared not for the slime :
Nor those Lethean reaches daunted then,
Not the long withered reed-beds, sad in ooze,
Not the black bulrush bank, against whose stems
The lap and washing of the sequent waves
Sough on for ever. Not the broken brows,
Steep at the river turn and undermined,
Wherefrom the snags of oak and tortured boughs
Project, and latticed ribs in skeleton
Jut from the crumbling margin, hung with weeds,
Trophies and wrecks of some old deluge gone,
That rot and fester in the eddying creeks.

Evading then these foul and crumbling brinks,
I planted footstep on a firmer soil.
Before me rose a great and gloomy plain,
Ridged into tracks by mighty chariot wheels,
And at its verge a formidable gate
With castled bastions like a mountain wall,
And adamantine portals smooth as ice.
And trembling I approached these Titan doors.

Then through the gate I entered Acheron,
 Region of sorrow, citadel of pain,
 The city with the sad-eyed citizens.
 Coasts of remorse and colonies of sin
 I traversed, sore of foot and sick of soul :
 I saw the awful many-sided face
 Of human agony. I found the dregs
 Of anguish and the deepest deeps of woe.

The bitter road is run. The goal is gained.
 Here at thy throne my gloomy journey ends,
 O purple-mantled Queen, with slow grave eyes,
 And I unbind my sandals, stained in blood,
 And make petition on adoring knee.
 Forgive and grant me pardon that I come.
 For great is Love, who gave me pilotage,
 And mighty in the land without a rose.
 I come not as Alcides, sheathed in mail.
 I have no shield but music and a lyre,
 Seven piteous chords, strung on a tortoise back.
 Dare I approach the impenetrable doors,
 Or batter at the famished gates of hell,
 So feebly furnished for the dire assault ?

Can music build the stars or mould the moon,
 Or wring assent from Hades' doubtful brows ?
 Can I make weep the stern and lovely Queen,
 Before whose feet the ripples of the dead
 Pass like an endless sea, beating her throne ?
 They move her not. In autumn's gusty hour
 Shall the innumerable broken leaves,
 The aimless russet-sided rushing leaves,
 Gain pity from the hatchet-handed boor,
 Who shears the stubborn oak, an eagle's throne ?
 Doth pity sting the rugged fisher folk
 For the blue tunnies snared inside their net ?
 She will not hearken. I shall sing in vain.

Yet song is great. These pale dishevelled ghosts
 Crowd in to hear with dim pathetic eyes,
 And quivering corners of their charnel lips.
 They rustle in from all the coasts of hell,
 As starlings mustering on their evening tree,
 Some blasted oak full in the sunset's eye.
 And over all the mead the vibrating
 Hiss of their chatter deepens. I can move
 These bat-like spectres. Can I move their Queen ?

Yet song is great : and in the listed war
 The hero, while some martial pæan thrills,
 Breathes out his soul upon the hostile spears,
 And gains—a wreath to bind his temples dead !

Ay, song is great, and even an iron Queen,
 Stern as her flinty judgment-seat of doom,
 May see on music's golden plume arise
 Ambrosial glimpses of a dawn divine,
 And pearl-drops in the rose-red heaven of youth.

THE INVOCATION

Queen, thou shalt hearken by the 'breath and
 fragrance
 Of those old lawns at Enna : by the gales
 That woke the drooping sister-violets,
 And mingled all the sward with musky thyme :
 By the trembling iris, by the speckled eye-bright,
 By the zoned orchis like a purple bee,
 By the rich mountain-tulip's splendid wings
 Dropt like a flame-tuft on the shelving crag :
 By the grey headland o'er the crescent bay :
 By the faint ripple of the island foam :
 By the sails that swept so proudly up the sea,
 By the stern galleys, pulsing golden oars,
 By every tuneful wind and wasted wave,
 By virgin innocence and vestal tears,
 And by thine own immortal maidenhood :—
 Ah, by remembrance of those asphodels—
 The lily of the Elysian heroes' rest—
 The asphodels flung groundward in dismay
 From thy faint trembling hands and fingers pure,
 What time the sudden chariot and wild steeds
 Rolled as a whirlwind, rushing up behind,
 While on thy bare and ivoried shoulder came
 Their breathing like the bellows of a forge—
 And he, the demon lover, from the car
 Stept as a cloud of gloom, and in his folds
 Wrapt thee, and night closed on thy radiant eyes.

O, I adjure thee by that day's despair,
 By those torn flowers thy lonely mother found
 In search for thee, scorched by the burning wheels :
 Ah, fallen flowers, have pity on them and me !

Bethink thee, Queen, how on that day one rose
 Fell, of all blooms that fell the sweetest bud,
 The mystic rose of girlhood ne'er rebloomed,
 Its virgin curtain broken, its dewdrops gone—
 Ah, not of Orcus all the sceptred gloom,
 The purple and the queendom and the gold,
 Shall do away touch of those gracious days,
 By the hum of Ætna, vineyard-clustered Ætna,
 Flushing its grapes with subterranean fire,
 Girdled with gleaming cities round its sides,
 And the hewn houses of great marble gods,
 By the Sicilian ocean, cold and clear,
 Whose deeps outpass in azure Hellas' seas,
 Whose nights have mellowed moons and clearer stars,
 Whose fountains gush from more enamelled meads,
 Whereby the halcyon flits, a tissued gleam,
 Bird of the rainbow : and the lovely land
 Is as one great and golden orchard plain,
 And haunted by some Genius, dropping balm,
 Winged, as a nightjar wings o'er darkened moors
 With plumes of silent flight.

I make appeal
 Beyond thy queendom and these nether shades :
 Out past the gloomy grandeur of thy throne
 I rise to other regions, other realms ;
 And my entreaty soars on eagle wing
 Beyond the horizon barriers of the past.
 I speak to one pale girl, who passed her hours
 With wool and distaff at her mother's side
 In the sweet long ago. Still beats thy heart
 The same behind the ruby-cinctured stole ;
 Although long years of judging guilty souls
 Have given thy lips and brow a stony mask,
 And changed thee in Medusa's loveliness
 For Hebe's roseleaf dimples. In those days
 The dews of pity came in easy tears,
 And slight occasion dimmed thy lucid eyes
 And brimmed their fountains. If athwart thy path,
 Prone from the lofty nest, some callow bird
 Lay shattered in unfeathered nakedness,
 A sight for tears. And tears thou couldst bestow,
 If with the hunter's arrow in her flank,
 With blood-drips, limping through the cork-woods came
 A mild and sobbing fawn. I half believe
 That the shed glories of a wasted rose
 Could make thee weeping-ripe for one dead flower.

Ah ! what a change has come ! The wax grows steel.
But in thy stern heart pity is not dead,
But on her lies the dust of cruel years.
Be once again the girl compassionate,
And lay aside the inexorable queen,
To hear my prayer, if only for an hour.
While I unroll the tragedy of love
In bleeding accents set to burning chords,
In agonies which thrill along my string.
Oh, for the language of a god to prove
The enormous desolation I endure !
Had Phœbus half my pain, all hell would weep.
Or if I had the mighty Sun-god's touch,
Then would I sweep the lyre with such a stress
And storm of passion, such supreme despair,
Such wailing emphasis, that I would make
The woods, the waves, the lonely mountains weep,
And I would drown all Nature in remorse,
A Niobe of tears, that this should be.
Until the withered phantom, hungry Death,
Relenting latest of created things,
In utter pity sets his cage-door wide.
And lets my lark soar back to crystal heaven,
Regaining that clear region, where her nest,
Empty and orphan, waits Eurydice.

What scourge from heaven, what scorpion whip of hell
Out-venoms my bereavement? Surely none.
To lose her any way were giant woe :
To lose her thus, ineffable despair.
Torn from my lips upon her spousal morn,
In the climax of her utmost dearness slain :
Slain at love's loveliest moment, ere the cup
Of her sweet being had enriched my life.
The rites at Hymen's gate were barely done,
The incense smouldering yet, the wine undried,
And trickling ruddy from the altar face
In our libations. Then the marriage train
Wound through the temple doors with choral hymn.
She, like a meadow-rose in bridal robes,
Light-hearted trips along the pastoral hills,
Her maidens round her, roses near the rose.
Sweet as the blushing planet of the dawn,
She went with hurrying footsteps, light and free,
In silken bents knee-deep and tufted thyme,
Nor knew within the sedge an adder coiled,

Nor saw she pressing death. But that ill worm,
 Evolving fanged and fiercely from the herb,
 Mailed round in sapphire bars and speckled scale,
 Kissed once her rosy feet, and kissed no more :
 But gave my darling sleep, measureless sleep ;
 And we stood round, like nations changed to rock,
 With some new Gorgon horror frozen numb.
 Then wild lament arose along the hills,
 And dirges came where hymeneals rang.
 Lord of his kingdom, Love sang pæan then ;
 Reft of his empire, we sing dirges now.
 And, sobbing cadence of funereal gloom,
 We wind her in the raiment of the dead,
 The shrouded mantle of eternal sleep,
 Ay me, the dear one. Then as twilight fell,
 With torch and taper rounded, crowned with yew,
 Wailing we bore her to the cypress lines,
 Sown with the urns and ash of fiery hearts
 Of old-world lovers, cold and gone to dust.
 Thither we bore her pallid on her bier,
 A silver moon cradled in ebony cloud ;
 And over her we sprinkled marigolds,
 Flowers of the dead, stars on the sable pall ;
 And there was one more gravestone, one more heart
 Broken, and in the world no other change.

What right have I to live, so crushed with woe?
 I dare not see the light now she is gone.
 I hate to watch the flower set up its face.
 I loathe the trembling shimmer of the sea,
 Its heaving roods of intertangled weed
 And orange sea-wrack with its necklace fruit ;
 The stale, insipid cadence of the dawn,
 The ringdove, tedious harper on five tones,
 The eternal havoc of the sodden leaves,
 Rotting the floors of Autumn. I am weary,
 Weary and incomplete and desolate.
 To me Spring, sceptred with her daffodil,
 Droops with a blight of dim mortality,
 And the birds sing Death and Eurydice.

Ah, dear and unforgotten ! on the wind
 Her voice comes often, low and sweet it comes,
 In such a sigh as draws the yearning soul
 Out of my breast to follow and float away,

To lean upon the storm with falcon wing,
 To overtake the laggard moaning blast,
 And clasp her in the whirlwind, shade to shade,
 And ghost to ghost. Then let us interlock
 Our spectral limbs, and so in mutual flight
 Rush at the sun and burn remembrance out.
 Be thou effectual Lethe to our pangs,
 O mighty fountain of primeval fire ;
 Father of lesser lights, compassionate,
 Burn out, abolish our two weary souls !
 Thou rollest on to rest the toiling stars.
 The meteor of the morning doth untie
 Her shining sandals on thy temple floor,
 And fiery flakes fall from her golden locks.

Forsaken Orpheus, smite once more the lyre :
 Sweep all thy echoing chords and make an end.
 Let sorrow quell the deep and vanquish Fate.
 Let song and pity, winged with burning words,
 Prevail upon a storm of melody,
 Melting the Queen's inexorable heart,
 As wax before the furnace of my pain.

O thou, most regal, arch and arbitress
 Of doleful nations, with thy mural crown,
 Rod of dominion, orb of adamant,
 Robed in the ruddy stain of vintage lees,
 With garments like the morning fiery red—
 I do adjure thee, lovely Proserpine,
 Terrible Proserpine, and yet most lovely,
 Release the viper-slain Eurydice,
 Untimely taken and supremely loved :
 Give her again to taste the gentle air,
 Let me extort her from this rugged Hell.

Lo, on my brow the toil-drops start as rain,
 Raised by the wrestling fervour of my prayer ;
 And all my blood beats in an agony
 Of hope and expectation. Ah ! relent.
 I see sweet pity dawning in thine eyes
 Immortal. O my Queen, on thee returns
 Breath of the ancient meads, thy mother's smile,
 The old, old days, the sweet, sweet times of eld.
 Thou shalt relent. O lady, is it much

To thin the frequency of thy crowded realms
By losing one poor captive, dearly loved ?
She will return after a few brief years
To thine eternity. 'Tis but one crumb
Pinched from the side of thy great loaf of death,
Daughter of Ceres ; but one grain of corn,
Which in this nether world all winter slept
To rise on wings of spring in glorious birth !

Clash, O my lyre, clash all thy golden chords !
For we have won ! I see the ghosts divide
To right and left a mighty lane of darkness
As from the utmost coasts of Acheron
Eurydice comes sailing like a star.
Dove of the cypress, come : my hungry soul
Awaits thee trembling with expanded arms.

THE MARCH OF GLORY

I HEAR the nations march,
As sweeping autumn rain,
By laurel-garnished arch,
And trophies of the slain.
To music proud and high,
By glory led,
The stern-eyed ranks go by,
To her battle-fields of dead.
Her heroes and her soldiers rush to die
Madly upon the spears with martial ecstasy.

The clash of battles psalm
Dilates their veins to glow ;
As tempest rocks the calm
Grey surge to fleece of snow.
With iron in each palm,
Invincible they go.
I hear the nations march.
Their ample ensign's fold,
Spread as an eagle's wing,
Flaps out in heavy gold :

THE MARCH OF GLORY

O'er sheeted targe and shield
The banners gaily swing :
On to their latest field
The advancing bugles ring.

Moving to victory with solemn voice,
With timbrels, and with drum-beat, and the noise
Of myriads : each man listens
For the laughter of her joys,
To each man glistens
The glitter of her eyes,
The phantom Glory leads the proud array,
They follow, as she flies,
And without reck or fears
Right on the vale of tears
Go marching gay.

Love's music mingles with the martial hymn,
And all the pealing clarions breathe of him,
The mighty voice, that recks not time or years,—
Love that no Death can dim,
Love that Death makes complete,
Whose glory is immense,
Whose laughter is passing sweet,
Beyond the reach of sense.

The laughter of one, who kisses well. The laugh
Of a great king, who mows his foes as chaff,
The laugh of the feaster, who sings in his pleasure.
The laugh of the miser, arm-deep in his treasure.
The laugh of the lark, when the young beam breaks
Its cloudy cover.
The laugh of the dreaming girl who wakes
And finds her lover.

Joy and Love and Triumph in their marching
Thou shalt hear, as sounds
Of tempest thro' the giant pinewood searching,
When the great clarion of the gale resounds.
March on with throbbing drums and bugle sigh,
Let the flute peal, the royal trumpet swell ;
Hail ! we salute thee, Queen, about to die :
Hail, Glory, and farewell !

A HYMN TO APHRODITE

URANIAN Aphrodite, fair
From ripples of the ocean spray :
Sweet as the sea-blooms in thy hair,
Rosed with the blush of early day,
O hear us from thy temple steep,
Where Eryx crowns the Dorian deep.

Unfold the rapture of thy face,
No more thy lustrous eyes conceal :
But from the rivers of thy grace
The rich abundant joys reveal
Give us the treasures of thy rest,
Take us as children to thy breast.

Desired of all the ages long,
As Morning young, as old as Fate
The kneeling world with choral song
Has crowded round thy altar gate.
Thine are the seasons past and dumb,
And thine the unborn years to come.

We are not worthy to endure
The fervour of thy burning eyes,
Thy perfect lips, thy bosom pure,
Thy radiant aspect, sweetly wise.
Breathe balm upon our span of breath,
For thou art almost queen of death.

To thee, enwreathed with passion flowers,
Our unreluctant prayers are given :
Thou art so near, when other powers
Seem worlds away in frigid heaven :
They know not, for they live apart,
The craving tumult of the heart.

Thy altar needs no victim slain :
It reeks not with the bleeding steer ;
Thy kingdom is no realm of pain,
Thy worship is no creature's fear.
Yet art thou trebly more divine,
Needing no hecatombs of kine.

AMARANTH

The empires wane, the empires grow :
 They prosper or they are dismayed :
 Time lays their wrangling voices low,
 The victors and the vanquished fade.
 The foam-wreath on the crested spray
 Lasts but an instant less than they.

But thou abidest, in thy might
 Eternal, and a rainbow beam
 Is round thy head ; and clusters bright
 Of orbs among thy tresses gleam :
 Clothed in the garment of the sun,
 Sweet as the star of day begun.

Parent of Nature, lovely queen,
 Awake the frozen land's repose,
 Until the perfumed buds are seen
 With promise of the myriad rose.
 Descend, and on thy halcyon wing
 Unlock the fountains of the spring.

AMARANTH

WHEN I have done with hornet grief,
 Nor fear the blind-worm, envy's sting,
 When graveward Lethe brings relief,
 And calms the love-god's fretful wing.

When I am clear of human kind,
 And slumber with the patient dead,
 Will she, the cruel, care to find
 Where they have laid my lonely head ?

And, once or twice, when spring is here,
 Forego some trivial social tie,
 To bring my grave a niggard tear,
 The sequel of a scanty sigh ?

Weep ! just enough to give your eyes
 A brightness, as of April rain :
 One tear for all my thousand sighs,
 And countless kisses given in vain.

Assign my solemn resting-place
Six moments of thy bustling day,
Between the drive, the mart, the race,
The rout, the concert, and the play.

Let wordlings and their world forget
To rule thee, darling, for an hour ;
Give me a fragment of regret,
Bring me some silly wayside flower.

And ask thy heart, that heart of steel,
How comes this man to sleep below ?
What phase of death was his to feel,
What shock of doom, what lethal blow ?

Speak in soft accents of thy friend ;
Dear heart, he cannot vex thee now,
For lovers' quarrels surely end,
When dust is on the lover's brow.

And let thy voice, I found so sweet,
Discuss my fate, appraise my deeds ;
And garner in thy heart my wheat,
And clean forget my idle weeds.

So let me feign and cheat my mind,
That thou wilt so rehearse my tale,
That I may fancy thou art kind,
When kindness is of small avail.

Say this—"I read, my ancient love,
The record of thy name and years,
Graved on the slab thy rest above :
'Tis brief—as brief as woman's tears."

Say then—"The long and sweet desire,
The fearless Hope, the granite Trust,
The poet's lips, the lover's fire,
Are ended—in a little dust.

"My old dead love was good and kind,
But he was broken down with woes :
And doubts upon his deeper mind
Made havoc in my dreams of rose.

"I said, Ye ages, bring me then
A perfect lover, rich and great,
A captain and a king of men,
Unroll him, misty clouds of Fate.

"But this poor love of homespun gray,
This honest heart, these faded eyes,
Come anywhen and any day—
My beauty claims a lordlier prize."

"He trod the humbler fields of time :
How should he gain me gear or gold ?
How should this dullard hope to climb,
Who hardly knew how Faith is sold ?

"He was no senate quack, who came
To nibble at the public purse,
And rise, a charlatan, to fame
By leaving bad a little worse.

"The balm of popular success
Ignored his inconspicuous head,
The unction of the daily press
In inky blessings ne'er was shed.

"He spun no cotton, owned no banks,
He ran no racers, gave no balls,
He had no deer with dappled flanks
To trot around his stuccoed halls.

"He came no king of beer to crowd
The jostling streets with barrelled drays.
No huckster, full of promise, loud
To sing the mighty Mammon's praise.

"Too proud to tell the rabble votes,
That all the mob demands is true :
Too dull to learn the parrot notes
Of Freedom from the last Review.

"Too slow to feign a patriot fire,
Then clutch the prizes of the game ;
Or follow ankle-deep in mire
The beckoning smile of spurious Fame.

"He did not trust some cherub black,
To ope the *El Dorado* gate,
Nor went with every lantern jack,
Who flickers o'er a festering State.

"He stood aside and watched the strife,
Weary, and longing to depart :
He left, as assets of his life,
The record of a wasted heart.

"At least he loved me : this concede :
But I entrenched my soul in pride.
So when I scorned and would not heed,
He drew Life's curtain down and died.

"Yet thro' the pleading of his vows
Ambition whispered, 'Do not yield,
He is as poor as some church mouse,
I lead you to a golden field.'

"Of all my lovers that remain,
None loved me with so firm a zeal.
My shallow fancy could not feign
A passion, which I dared not feel.

"He was too humble in his suit,
And I too proud in my disdain ;
And now, because his lips are mute,
I fain would hear their love again.

"I fain would have thee at my side,
When Spring is reaching out her hands,
When April, like a weeping bride,
Sails o'er the rosy orchard lands.

"When May winds bathe the reedy isles,
Where swans are nesting with their broods,
And sheets of sapphire pave for miles
The floors of hyacinthine woods.

"When sweet-field roses fringe the lane,
And balmy hangs the incense thorn :
And, dreaming of ambrosial rain,
The violet wakens, morn by morn,

"He will not wake, tho' snowdrops rise,
 Nor greet the woodland bells of blue :—
 I hail thee, love, with streaming eyes,
 Adieu, my love ! my love, adieu !

"Thou canst not breathe the morning breath,
 Nor hear the bees about the bloom,
 Nor see them settle on this wreath,
 My trembling fingers bring thy tomb.

"I bring thee amaranth and rue.
 I leave my garland and depart,
 More bitter than the branch of yew
 The anguish of my aching heart.'

CIRCE

THIS is the fair witch Circe, queen divine,
 The daughter of the Sun : her charming wand
 Rests on her ivory shoulder at command :
 She holds a chalice of enchanted wine,
 The sweet wine sweeter from the rosy hand.
 She sits within a grove of gray wych-elms,
 And sings across the waves with siren breath,
 To call her lovers in from twilight realms,
 To crowd their foolish sails for love and death.
 And near the rocking breakers, drear and dread,
 She hath a lordly palace of delight,
 And a rich chamber where her couch is spread
 With gems like orient sunrise, flashing light ;
 Ruby and opal, sard and sardonyx
 In soft effulgence mix ;
 Beryl and chrysolite
 Beam on her brow by night :
 Her drowsy lips are kissed
 By rays of amethyst.

A loom is in her chamber, purple-flecked
 A giant web expands, whereon is wrought
 Nature in all her colours, fancy-caught ;
 Above that web two Cupids rosy-necked,

Almost alive in tinted Parian rock,
Mingle their locks together, each gauzed wing
Trembles and fans with light ærial shock.
As when two bees within one peony swing,
These brother Loves embrace,
Rosed with the shadow of the rose's face.
With fragrant mouths they seem to interbreathe,
And there is passion in their lips of stone,
That gives the icy marble living grace,
And flushes underneath :
As on the snow-cloud grows
The dawn's red undertone,
When lispng zephyr blows.

And on each image from a flickering fire
Of cedar logs and bay-wood heaped behind
Reddens the flame and shimmers at its spire.
But of those Loves is neither sculptured blind.
One holds a rose—that means long love desire :
One holds an asphodel—that means reward.
And on their brows is coral-berried yew,
An emblem harsh and hard,
That means—ah, well a day,—
For lovers false and lovers true,
Sleep and its cloudy pinions, silvering
The folded hands and sharpened faces gray,
Sleep on her raven wing :
Sleep that no magic flower can charm away,
Or make us rise again,
The ruined sons of Care :
The slain of Love, the slain
Of the huge hooks and arrows of Despair.
O asphodel, Elysian asphodel,
Bedding Adonis in his wounded pain,
Flower of the heroes' dell,—
Dead lovers these of thine,
My Circe fine,
They are beyond thy sway
Into a deeper day
Past, unremembered wrecks of vain desire,
And broken lutes of passion's golden lyre.
Thy might is ended where the grave begins,
And thy innocuous spells
Fall by the margin of the sea of sins,
Done with as empty shells.

Dead, ay, and done with, not thy beauty's beam
 Can make these men arise :
 Their feet are tangled in the nets of dream,
 They cross the stream of sighs.
 Canst thou put breath between those wasted lips
 That hold the boatman's toll,
 The ferry-coin, where uncouth Charon ships
 The Lethe-sailing soul ?
 They end and thou abidest : in a shroud
 They pass to dust. New victims find thee fair :
 Into thy net new shoals of tunnies crowd,
 New moths fall burning from thy radiant hair.
 These creatures of a day acclaim thee queen,
 And for their span of time exalt thy power ;
 All nature lies before thee, fresh and green,
 My locust to devour.
 Siren of blood and tears, the road to thee
 Is paved with bramble hooks that rend the feet,
 Thy crystal breast is paradise to see,
 Beyond all breath of roses thou art sweet.
 Thy brows, more lovely than the rainbow, are
 Woven with many a star
 Of the delicious deadly asphodel,
 That in thy tresses braided shines afar,
 When thou dost weave thy spell :
 Stern as Medea in her dragon car,
 Or as Canidia fell :
 Or cruel as Medusa's sculptured face,
 Set on a targe of war.
 But other days thou wearest childish grace
 By contrast to ensnare,
 Aping the startled fawn, whom bugles scare,
 Blown in the dewy glade.
 Or in some new disguise,
 To allure deluded eyes,
 Thou art the shrinking violet, half afraid,
 That, in rathe April born,
 Where icy winds complain,
 Hardly unfolds her petals to the morn
 Between the rainbow and the weep of rain.

What blind one, wearing eyes and wanting brain,
 Wilt thou, pale Circe conquer with thy spell ?
 To whom are kisses given,
 Until he holds thee beautiful as heaven,
 Golden as gold, too sweet for words to tell.

And all his soul is in thy roseleaf hands,
Where thou a queen dost sit in soft repose,
Watching the radiant lands.
Thy shrine of Love is there
A charnel masked with rose,
Love guards the entrance fair,
Ringed round with rainbow glows.
'Tis Love disguised as Death
Sits masked in iris ray,
And under his rose wreath
The scanty locks grow gray.
His eyes are hollow dim,
As a glow-worm on a grave,
He is great, O kneel to him :
Great to slay, and great to save.
Beneath the altar floors
The poisoned adder waits.
Behind the agate doors,
And round the burnished gates
The mighty pythons coil.
And toads unsanctified
The precinct pavement soil,
And in the garlands hide.
The altar burns ; in rubied cup divine,
From perfumed chalice shed,
Pour out the glow of thy enchanted wine,
Wine for the lovers, who have loved thee dear,
And come to wed :
A cup of consolation, deep and clear,
They need no second tasting : they are dead.

In saffron-coloured pride
For Hymen art thou clad,
My Circe, sweeter bride
Ne'er made a bridegroom glad.
Or draped in Fortune's robe,
Ruler of blood and breath,
Thy wheel directs the globe,
O Fortune, which art Death !
Thy paradise embowers
Faint Acherusian flowers,
The warlock's charms of might,
Dwale, henbane, aconite
From gardens of despair,
To be as orange blossom in thy hair,
Sweet deadly rose ;

Altar of Love wrapt round with hemlock band,
 To whom exultant goes
 Thy victim and thy bridegroom : to whose hand
 Death shall divide his posies, as the bride
 Divides her kisses bland,
 In maiden pride.
 Death shall assign the coral apples small,
 The blooms of violet hue
 And central orange anther, whence bees fall
 Drowsy with poisoned dew,
 This is the nightshade, and its night is drear.
 It apes the honest ivy in its leaves,
 And in its grapelets mocks the clusters clear,
 That shade the brow of Bacchus ; when he weaves
 Some drowsy nymph in tendril curls of vine ;
 What better bloom divine
 Could drape our Circe for her couch attired,
 And veil her gentle breast,
 An Ariadne of all men desired,
 But only god-caressed :
 As she lies sparkling in her nuptial glory :
 What tho' its leaves behind
 With fang-froth yet be hoary,
 Are not all lovers blind ?
 'Tis but the cuckoo's kiss,
 Which bathes the clematis,
 Or the ragged robin often,
 When east winds begin to soften.

And who art thou, enchantress, serpent fell,
 Lamia, whose dazzling eyes
 Draw as with cords the nations to thy spell
 To perish ? Thou, who slayest with love-sighs
 Thy foolish lovers : fast as summer flies
 Drop in a cup of mead or hydromel,
 Or tangle in the web Arachne ties.
 O loveless vengeance, masked in Love's attire,
 O hate, that stealest Passion's sweetest lyre.
 Vampire, whose beauty ripens on much death,
 Siren, whose throne is built with bones beneath ;
 Blaspheming, soiling, and degrading him
 The ineffable, the crown, the ray
 Of all things ; in whose absence heaven is dim,
 Love, at whose effluence utmost earth is gay,
 And the gray fountains flow,
 And the rathe lilies blow ;

Love lays his emerald mantle on the hills,
Love pours his rich blood in the mountain rills :
He bathes in sunset colours the flushed sea,
Mighty and lord is he.
What dire Plutonian birth
On this bewildered earth
Gave breath and empire, baleful queen, to thee ?
Wild pæan shook the Eblis halls of fire,
When thou wert born : old woes,
Shadows and phantoms of outwept desire,
Long dead, from charnels rose.
Love on thy cradle smiled, a babe divine,
And watched thy infant breath,
Love bitter as Despair and sweet as wine,
Love bitter-sweet as Death.
Time guided thee a daughter of delight
Upon thy beaming way :
And hung thy hair with jewels, as the night
Is spangled with star-ray.
Time made thee lovelier than all paradise,
A drop of god's own dew,
Distilled into a rainbow from blue ice,
Where falcon never flew.
The vital pomp of may-time and of morn
Shall glitter in her eyes.
Princes shall sell their honour for her scorn,
And wreck their realms with sighs.
If she lament, the languid lilies stain,
If she deplore, rust gathers on the rose.
If she bewail, in sympathetic pain
Night weeping rings with philomela's woes.
The stars attend her dreams
And bathe her with repose,
She lies in silver beams
A flushed unopened rose.

HELLAS AND ROME

OF Greece the Muse of Glory sings,
Of Greece in furious onset brave ;
Whose mighty fleets, on falcon wings,
To vengeance sweep across the wave.

There on the mounded flats of Troy
The hero captains of the morn
Come forth and conquer, tho' the boy
Of Thetis keeps his tent in scorn.

There in the sweet Ionian prime
The much-enduring sailor goes,
And from the thorny paths of time
He plucks adventure like a rose.

There sits Atrides, grave and great,
Grim king of blood and lust-deed done,
Caught in the iron wheels of Fate
To hand the curse from sire to son.

A fated race ! . And who are these
With viper locks and scorpion rods,
Dim shades of ruin and disease,
Who float around his household Gods ?

Alas, for wife and children small :
Blood comes, as from the rosebush bloom ;
The very dogs about his hall
Are conscious of their master's doom.

Or see the fleet victorious steed
In Pindar's whirlwind sweep along,
To whom a more than mortal meed
Remains, the bard's eternal song.

What are the statues Phidias cast,
But dust between the palms of Fate ?
A thousand winters cannot blast
Their leaf ; if Pindar celebrate

Great Hiero, Lord of Syracuse,
Or Theron, chief of Acragas,
These despots wisely may refuse
Record in unending brass.

For Pindar sang the sinewy frame,
The nimble athlete's supple grip ;
He gave the gallant horse to fame,
Who passed the goal without a whip,

The coursers of the island kings
Jove-born, magnanimously calm :
When gathered Greece at Elis rings
In pæan of the victor's palm.

Or hear the shepherd bard divine
Transfuse the music of his lay
With echoes from the mountain pine,
And wave-wash from the answering bay.

And all around in pasturing flocks
His goatherds flute with plaintive reeds,
His lovers whisper from the rocks,
His halcyons flit o'er flowery meads :

Where galingale with iris blends
In plummy fringe of lady fern ;
And sweet the Dorian wave descends
From topmost Ætna's snow-bright urn.

Or gentle Arethusa lies,
Beside her brimming fountain sweet,
With lovely brow and languid eyes,
And river lilies at her feet.

Or listen to the lordly hymn,
The weird Adonis, pealing new,
Full of the crimson twilight dim,
Bathed in Astarte's fiery dew.

In splendid shrine without a breath
The wounded lovely hunter lies :
And who has decked the couch of death ?
The sister-spouse of Ptolemies.

We seem to hear a god's lament,
The sobbing pathos of despair :
We seem to see her garments rent,
And ashes in ambrosial hair.

Clouds gather, where the mystic Nile,
Seven-headed, stains the ambient deep.
The chidden sun forgets to smile,
Where lilies on lake Moeris sleep.

Slumber and Silence cloud the face
Of Isis in gold-ivory shrine :
And Silence seems to reach the race,
Whose youth was more than half divine.

'Tis gone—The chords no longer glow :
The Bards of Greece forget to sing ;
Their hands are numb, their hearts are slow :
Their numbers creep without a wing.

Their ebbing Helicons refuse
The droplet of a drougthy tide.
The fleeting footsteps of the Muse
We follow to the Tiber side.

The Dorian Muse with Cypris ends :
With Cypris wakes the Latian lyre :
And, sternly sweet, Lucretius blends
Her praise inspired with epic fire.

To thee, my Memmius, amply swells
Rich prelude to her genial power,
Her world-renewing force, which dwells
In man, herd, insect, fish, or flower.

Supremely fair, serenely sweet,
The wondering waves beheld her birth,
The power, whose regal pulses beat
Thro' every fibre of the earth.

Why should we tax the gods with woe,
They sit outside, they bear no part ?
They never wove the rainbow's glow,
They never built the human heart.

These careless idlers who can blame ?
If Chance and Nature govern men :
The universe from atoms came,
And back to atoms rolls again.

As earthly kings they keep their state,
The cup of joy is in their hands ;
The war-note deepens at their gate,
They hear a wail of hungry lands,

They feast, they let the turmoil drive,
And Nature scorns their fleeting sway :
She ruled before they were alive,
She rules when they are passed away.

Before the poet's wistful face
The flaming walls of ether glow :
He sees the lurid brinks of Space,
Nor trembles at the gulfs below.

He feels himself a foundering bark,
Tossed on the tides of Time alone.
Blindly he rushes on the dark,
Nor waits his summons to be gone.

Wake, mighty Virgil, nor refuse
Some glimpses of thy laurelled face :
Sound westward, wise Ausonian Muse,
The epic of a martial race.

Grim warriors, whom the wolf-dug rears,
Strong legions, patient, steadfast, brave,
Who meet the shock of hostile spears,
As sea-walls meet the trivial wave.

Justice and Peace their highest good,
By sacred law they held their sway,
The ruler's instinct in their blood
Taught them to govern and obey.

They crushed the proud, the weak they spared,
They loosed the prostrate captive's chain :
And civic rights and birthright shared
Made him respect their equal reign.

They grappled in their nervous hands
The nations as a lump of dough :
To Calpe came their gleaming bands,
To Ister grinding reefs of snow.

And where the reedy Mincius rolled
By Manto's marsh the crystal swan,
There Maro smote his harp of gold,
And on the chords fierce glory shone.

The crested metre clomb and fell ;
The sounding word, the burnished phrase
Rocked on like ocean's tidal swell,
With sunbeam on the water-ways.

He sang the armoured man of fate,
The father of eternal Rome,
The great begetter of the great,
Who piled the empire yet to come.

He sang of Daphnis, rapt to heaven,
At threshold of Olympian doors,
Who sees below the cloud rack driven,
And wonders at the gleaming floors.

He sang the babe, whose wondrous birth,
By Cumæ's sibyl long foretold,
Should rule a renovated earth,
An empire and an age of gold.

He sang great Gallus wrapt in woe,
When sweet Lycoris dared depart
To follow in the Rhineland snow
The soldier of her fickle heart.

The nectared lips that sang are mute,
And dust the pale Virgilian brows,
And dust the wonder of the lute,
And dust around the charnel-house.

Above the aloes spiring tall,
Among the oleander's bloom,
Urned in a craggy mountain hall,
The peasant points to Virgil's tomb.

The empire, which oppressed the world,
Has vanished like a bead of foam ;
And down the rugged Goths have hurled
The slender roseleaf sons of Rome.

For ages in some northern cave
The plaintive Muse of herdsmen slept,
Till, waking by the Cam's wise wave,
Once more her Lycid lost she wept.

As pilgrims to thy realm of death,
Great Maro, we are humbly come,
To breathe one hour thy native breath,
To scan the lordly wreck of Rome.

And, tho' thy Muses all are fled
To some uncouth Teutonic town,
Sleep, minstrel of the mighty dead,
Sleep in the fields of thy renown.

A WINTER SKETCH

WHEN the snow begins to feather,
And the woods begin to roar,
Clashing angry boughs together,
As the breakers grind the shore.
Nature then a bankrupt goes,
Full of wreck and full of woes.

When the swan for warmer forelands
Leaves the sea-firth's icebound edge :
When the gray geese from the moorlands
Cleave the cloud in noisy wedge.
Woodlands stand in frozen chains,
Hung with ropes of solid rains.

Shepherds creep to byre and haven,
Sheep in drifts are nipped and numb :
Some belated rook or raven
Rocks upon a sign-post dumb.
Mere-waves solid as a clod
Roar with skaters thunder-shod.

All the roofs and chimneys rumble,
Roads are ridged with slush and sleet ;
Down the orchard apples tumble,
Ploughboys stamp their frosty feet.
Millers, jolted down the lanes,
Hardly feel for cold their reins.

A SONG OF DUST

Snipes are calling from the trenches,
 Frozen half and half at flow,
 In the porches servant wenches
 Work with shovels at the snow.
 Rusty blackbirds, weak of wing,
 Clean forget they once could sing.

Dogs and boys fetch down the cattle,
 Deep in mire and powdered pale :
 Spinning wheels commence to rattle,
 Landlords spice the smoking ale.
 Hail, white winter, lady fine,
 In a cup of elder wine.

A SONG OF DUST

WHEN we, my love, are gone to dust,
 And nature, as of old, is fair :
 When on thy rosy cheek is rust,
 And stain sepulchral on thy hair.

When from the slab, that marks our sleep,
 The raindrop eats our names away :
 And cushioned lichens gently creep
 To make the beaming letters gray.

When March winds wake the silken palm,
 And wave-worn wheatears skim the sea.
 When merles begin their marriage psalm,
 And doves are tender in the tree.

When, year by year, the mosses bloom
 Their little elfin caps of red :
 And April dewdrops on thy tomb
 Weep out in daisies o'er the dead ;

These tears, I weep upon thy hand,
 Shall pass as leaves in autumn air.
 And who unborn shall understand,
 If thou wert sweet, if thou wert fair ?

Who shall embalm thee in a song
A hundred years to cheat repose?
Oblivion rolls its flood along,
Till Time forgets one wasted rose.

Who shall explain this lovely thing
To generations yet to be?
Will evanescent beauty wing
Her flight to dim futurity?

No lease is hers of lengthened hours :
Her love a momentary ray,
Crisping the calyx of the flowers,
Is sped before the lift of day.

A little while the whitethorn blows,
And all the grasses rarely spring.
Then crimson out the wild field rose,
And swallows rest their travelled wing.

And fair are maidens in their prime ;
And lovers pledge eternal truth,
When for an hour the cup of Time
Is nectar on the lips of youth.

Love and the nest of birds are sweet ;
Till, like a broken hope, the flower,
Warm at the early sunbeam's feet,
Lies shattered cold at evening's hour.

No perfect joy thy life endears.
What light is thine? Some casual gleam,
Which, rising thro' a mist of tears,
Falls on the phantoms of thy dream.

All shall forget thee, as a breath
From clover meadows richly shed ;
Divine as coloured evening's death,
Thy cheek will lose its lustrous red.

Pale as a wreath of alpine snows,
She lies in marble silence sweet,
When rigid Death doth interpose
The stark and long-drawn winding sheet.

A SONG OF DUST

O region of the moonless grave,
Lonely and lurid is thy home,
Where Love, who came so fresh and brave,
Is narrowed in with shelving loam.

Love old and gray and nearly blind
Among the mounds, whose bleeding feet
The fangs of winding brambles bind,
The hooks of bitter roses meet.

And Pride, with all her trophies torn,
Hangs o'er a funeral urn to weep
The devious night, the tardy morn,
Belated in the paths of sleep.

And eyes, that dim the violet made,
Forget to shed their gracious rays :
When, on each darkened eyelid's shade,
The midnight of oblivion weighs.

The ages in an endless tide
Advance their still encroaching feet :
The present, like a golden bride,
Is faultless for an hour and sweet.

Time will not stay for thee, my love,
The clouds are coming and the snow ;
The thunder rocks the realms above—
One farewell kiss before we go.

.

A song of dust for waning years,
A solemn song in sackcloth clad :
Whose chords are wet with poignant tears,
And its pale singer's lips are sad.

THE DEATH OF PHAETHON

PHAETHON, HAVING PERSUADED HIS FATHER, HELIOS, TO
ALLOW HIM TO DRIVE THE CHARIOT OF THE SUN FOR
ONE DAY, STARTS ON HIS JOURNEY

BEFORE him the immeasurable heaven
Lay deep and boundless. The eternal stars,
Pulsing and throbbing in the blue profound,
Grew nearer. Slow revolving lights of heaven,
Their golden spheres with moony clusters mixed,
Made orbit ; and, beyond, as amber dust,
A sprinkling of innumerable globes,
Sown on the outward limits of the void :
Beyond all computation and account,
The seed and drift of undeveloped worlds,
In their bright millions rolling on their way.
The wonder of that wilderness of god
Flushed all his face, as swiftly rolled the car.
So slides some fleecy cloud along the dawn,
When the young east grows rosy, and wild rain,
Wrecks half the mountain woods and rends the pines.

So in his brief and baleful hour of joy,
The boy exulted in the soaring rush
Of that celestial road : he joyed to feel
The mighty long-haired coursers of the sun
At his command, and all their speed his own.
The gleaming chariot his : the pomp of heaven,
His : in his veins the ichor of a god
Seemed to dilate his pulse with spirit fire.
And with an easy rein his hand could guide
Time and Dominion : his to wake the world,
His to refresh the flushed auroral light
In splendid waves and cloud of purple foam,
A glorious task, well worth a god's control,
To wake the dewy fields and oceans old,
And lift the veil from Morning's violet eyes.

Then the rash boy in arrogant disdain
Shook the bright reins and shouted impious words
Behind the horses, nor the lash refrained ;
Vain-glorious, clouded with the madding fume

Of ill-accustomed honour. He would climb
God with the godlike now. Too long withheld
He grasped his birthright : all the bitter past,
Sordid, obscure, the delving, rustic days,
The dark dim days with herds and vacant boors,
End in the nectar cup and festal heaven.

As when the rathe and poignant spring divine
Sighs all too soon among the hoary woods,
And from the fleecy drifts of sodden snow
With promise and with perfume calls her buds,
And the buds open when they hear her feet,
And open but to perish. So his heart
Bloomed in a burst of immortality,
Nor feared the onward rolling vans of doom.
Yearning he had and hunger to ascend,
To sit at endless feast, with purple robes
To fold his limbs in sheer magnificence.
With rays of glory round his radiant hair,
And deity effulgent in his brows :
A dream divine, whose passionate desire
Flooded his soul, till in the golden car
He trembled at the vision : as a leaf
Moved by a gale of splendour, that comes on,
When, at the point of sunrise, the wind sweeps
With sudden ray and music across the sea.
So in that rapture of presumptuous joy
He spake a dreadful and an impious word ;
That he was nature's lord and king of gods,
He cared not now for Zeus, how should he care ?
Let the old dotard nod and doze above.
He rode the morning in unchecked career,
Apparelled in his sire's regalities,
The new Hyperion, greater than his sire ;
While the swift hooves beat music to his dream :
And for a little while his heart was glad,
Throbbing Olympian ichors. For an hour
Elate, he bore an ecstasy too great
For mortal nerve, and knew the pride of gods.

The rushing air came on his brows, the deep
Ether around him rustled in his ears.
Among those awful solitudes, on, on,
The headlong onset of his coursers swept.
Light and the speed drew dimness on his eyes :
And, in the flakes and sparkles of the wheels,

He drove as in a fountain drift of fire,
Orbed in a splendid shower of lambent gold ;
He bore it not for long, an icy chill
Crept upwards inch by inch against his heart,
And formless horror deepened up behind ;
Ungessed as yet, more awful from the shroud,
That hid its spectral features, creeping on.
Then impious exultation flared and fled,
And shuddering he beheld before his mind,
No nectar cup but Charon's charnel boat.
And the rose visions on his region clouds
Unpurpled all their gates, and gathered in
A core of thunder ripening ragged brows.
He saw and he despaired : an abject fear
Perplexed the demigod, who lately rode
Vaunting himself so proudly : now dismayed,
And horribly confounded in the toils
Of the great net his upstart pride had spread.

But when the horses guessed their driver's fear,
And felt the reins that shuddered in his grasp,
A grievous panic dimmed their dauntless mood,
In anger at the feeble charioteer.
Then with mad impulse and a headlong ire,
They scorned control, and swept resistless on——
Who shall assuage them now ? Not Hercules,
Not Atlas shoring up the beams of heaven.
And all the chariot rocked from side to side,
And he, who guided, quailed upon his bench ;
For these ethereal coursers, panic-wild,
Felt not his check and heeded not his rein
More than the pressure of a lighted fly.
He might as well pull back some granite cliff,
Athos unroot, dislodge Pelorus huge :
Or drag some river python from his ooze,
As set his weakling hand to check or chain
The corded sinews of their iron necks.
How could he calm their nostrils, snorting out
The cloudy vapour of resentful ire ?
He found no balm, no comfort, no resource :
And so with ineffectual fingers numb,
Gave them reluctant way and let them sweep,
Through splendid zones of flushing roseate haze ;
He heeded not their splendour : he beheld
The glimmer of his last poor rushlight hope
Abolished, vanished, blotted out, extinct.

He saw the vengeance of the sire supreme
Reach in red anger at his armories,
To unlink the sleeping thunder. And he knew,
That from the gloomy oracles of Jove
Doom had gone out on his presumptuous head.

Then scorning curb at such a nerveless hand,
The mighty steeds, who bring the beam of morn,
In furious speed, revolting, broke away,
Straining the reins and loosening on the void
Flakes of dim foam, shed off like little clouds :
Wide-eyed, dishevelled, tossing their lithe heads,
And ruffling out the tangle of their manes,
Groaning and heaving, vapoured in a breath
Of effort, toiling as immortals toil :
And down their panting flanks the heat-drops rolled.

Then those undaunted horses first knew fear,
And cloudy horror vexed their mighty hearts,
When they perceived, Fate, mother of surprise,
Had made the sacred process of the sun
The plaything of a fool to steer or wreck,
With novice hand : an earthborn charioteer,
Usurping the Titanic chariot-bench,
To shatter on the void immense abyss
The fragments of the sun's triumphal march.
What time the fool himself, this spurious god,
Rocking and swaying in the chariot floor,
Clutched at the golden rail with palsied hand.
As some clown drunk with fumes of trodden wine,
When the red vats unpurple all the hills,
And the must trickles down to pipe and song,
As the rude orgies of the wake begin.
So stood he dazed and heaved a painful breath,
That caught and laboured harshly in his throat.
Not less between his parched and livid lips
The torment of immeasurable thirst
Raged as a flame, and greatedened as they flew.
While, matting his half-girlish forehead curls,
The dew of his distress lay beaded cold.

But far away beneath those burning wheels,
Came up a gentle whisper of sea waves,
Murmur and ripple of music dimly heard,
And pleasant shocks of foam : and shaken bells

On the faint pastoral hills by curving shores,
And dim gray forelands steeped in roseate haze :
And the white fisher cities, perched as birds,
In nooks and margins of the mighty seas
At rest : the reed-thatched homes of humble men,
Who never cloudward soared, but in content
Lived on the fickle favour of the waves ;
And ploughed for harvest in the heaving fields
Of rolling Neptune and his gray-green realms.

But neither restful peace nor human joy
Lived in the aspect of thy anguished eyes,
Sad son of Phœbus, on whose rash career
The inevitable silence crushing came
To numb thee round in huge Pythonian coils.
Then in one supreme effort for his life,
Fiercely he set his ebbing strength to stem
That awful chariot race, where Hades sat
As arbiter, adjudging wreathes of yew.
Yet vain his effort ; cut with leathern thongs,
He dropped his bleeding fingers, maimed and torn.
And those wild coursers swept remorseless on,
Because a fool had teased and angered them,
To end rebuke and the rebuker there,
And wreck themselves, and shed this ape of gods
Prone upon ether like a flake of snow.

Then the sad wretch, seeing his hour was come,
Called on his father in a hoarse wild cry,
Between a sigh and sob, most dire to hear :
And from his aching hands, relaxed with toil,
He dropt the useless wrestle of the reins.
They, fluttering in a downward tangle, fell,
And caught among the traces and the hooves :
And snapt and cracked, and the fierce horses plunged,
Jumbled in wreck, and rolled with frantic feet.
Then came a crash, as when thro' sodden clouds,
Tearing and hissing the blue bolt descends ;
And on some towering temple's long façade
Lights in red vengeance, hurling from the frieze
Its marble god, the genius of the fane ;
So with a deafening peal of thunder shock,
The dazzling Delian car was overturned,
Wondrous, eternal, treasure-house of rays,—
Which even gods revere and men adore

With suppliant knee, as in itself a god—
Wrecked, ruined, drifted on the idle winds,
No better than an infant's broken toy :
Into the cloud abyss that racked below,
Shed as a dew-bead on a spider's raft.
And, headlong from the splintered chariot-bench,
The charioteer fell like a fluttered leaf ;
Or as a feather shaken from the wing
Of some high-soaring eagle, when the hail
Falls in a whirlwind and the woods cry back.

So fell the doomed one, reaching to his sire
An ineffectual heap of yearning arms,
His father aidless at the pinch of need,
Remote and far away in idle heaven ;
Lapt in amaracus and asphodel, :
Lotus and oleander and musk-rose
Reclined at endless feast, and had no heed,
Purpling with nectar draughts his lip divine,
And thought not on his agonising son.

So helpless and so headlong didst thou fall,
Weak heart, unequal to the fiery helm,
A rush of heaving limb and fluttered robe,
Rolling and spinning like a plummet down
Into the spacious gulf of deep blue air :
Poor mortal fool, masked in a god's attire,
To die in borrowed trappings not thine own.
And as a diver, plunging down, divides
The columned wall of waters with his weight,
Which close in swift reunion, as he sinks,
Above his headlong passage to the pearl,—
Where the fell shark, that floating dragon, guards
The rich Hesperian orchards of the main—
So, through the cloudy stories of the sky,
Long purple belts and blood-red vapour lines,
Fell Phaethon ; as falls some Pleiad lost,
Dead from the dance her starry sisters weave :
And, falling, in his horror he beheld
Merciless crag and angry precipice,
Waiting to rend him. Underneath, the earth
Rushed up to meet him with incredible speed,
Till one green field like lightning came at him,
Struck his brow wildly and dashed him into dead,
Shapeless and shattered, void of glory now,
Red clay to-day, to-morrow a little dust.

Ay me, ay me, now let the wail begin.
 Where is the bright young god, the lovely where?
 The sweet limbs like a maiden's, very white,
 The cheek one rose-leaf? The young voice like song?
 Crushed lies the hand that thought to guide the sun :
 Still the proud heart and cold the marble lips,
 Thirsting in vain the chalice of the gods.
 Ay me, ay me ; so must it always end,
 When man, the mock of doom, this fleeting shade,
 Disdains the narrow pinfold of his fate :
 And breaks his heart in vain attempts to scale
 The rampart of the adamantine rocks,
 Whereon the careless Zeus sits calm and crowned.
 Low art thou fallen, hapless Phaethon ;
 Be merciful, ye flowers, and cover him :
 Be silent, birds and bees : gray fountains weep :
 Let his fair sisters come with wild lament,
 And in their fresh hands bring the cypress bough,
 And let the dirge begin. Thou shalt be mourned,
 More than Idalia mourned her shepherd lost.
 And softly on thy urn shall fall the tear
 Of kindred maidens. They shall wrap thy limbs
 In costly cerements as a monarch's son ;
 And hide thy ashes in a marble tomb,
 And give thee yearly rites and garlands due ;
 As, in the train of each revolving spring,
 This sad day lives again ; and men shall tell
 Thy story thro' the never-ending years.

ANTHEA'S GARLAND

ROSES, bright with tears of rain,
 Which Anthea's tresses bind,
 Proudly in her service slain,
 Shed your blossoms on the wind.

Petals, pure as ocean shell,
 Leaf by leaf must fall away :
 As from raptured philomel,
 Note by note, descends her lay,

Cadence shaken on the gale,
Fragments of divine desire,
When the enamoured nightingale
Breaks her heart against a brier.

So let my Anthea's wreath
Perish with a royal doom,
Wasted by the May-god's breath,
Dirged by zephyrs to its tomb.

Die and break upon her breast,
Where the sister roses lie ;
Perish near the ambrosial nest,
Where a dove might come to die.

Till she turn her lustrous eyes
Downwards on each ruined flower,
Musing with a world of sighs—
"Love is broken in an hour.

"Let me sing thy requiem,
Wasted wreath, which bound my hair,
Roses pleasant on the stem,
Sweetened in the crystal air.

"Let me speak your epitaph,
Garland roses, soon to die.
On the maiden's heedless laugh,
Comes the mother's anxious sigh.

"Gay to-day and gray to-morrow,
Sad at eve, at morning blithe,
Runs the burden of our sorrow,
While the Time-God whets his scythe.

"Not in scorn or idle laughter
Empty solace will I seek ;
As this faded wreath, hereafter
Soon will fade my damask cheek.

"In Youth's iris-purpled spaces
Lovers join their lips in trust :
In the realm of faded faces
Youth and Love return to dust.

"Hail, ye soon dismembered roses,
Hail, dishevelled wreath forlorn.
In the gracious garden closes
Noon repairs the wrecks of morn.

"Soon they blow and soon they perish,
Bud and bloom and melt as snows.
And this god, whom maidens cherish,
Love, is briefer than a rose."

So she mused and so she ended,
First she laughed and then she frowned,
For the garland, once so splendid,
Lay in fragments on the ground.

THE FIRST MADRIGAL

COME away, O gentle breast,
Who can tell if Love will stay?
As the purple in the west,
Love at even fades away:
As the breaker's foam-wreath crest
Cannot keep its iris ray.

Bloom at ease, most radiant rose,
Spread thy splendour flushed with light;
Will the cloudy verge disclose
Halcyon skies for ever bright?
Who can tell, what drifted snows
Menace from the deep-browed night?

Fear the fiercely driving rack
With its drench of swollen hail;
Who shall build thy petals back,
If they fall beneath its flail,
Shattered, in a whirlwind's track,
Ruined rosebud of the vale?

Will the gnawing canker's hate
Blight the buds, tho' tempest spare?
Beauty has no certain date:
If one instant she is fair,
Lapsing Time and wheeling Fate
Change her grandeur to despair.

AN ODE TO A STAR

Love, who burning came at noon,
 Coldly turns at eve to go.
 When the golden hours of June
 Change into the month of snow,
 Weeping Love forgets too soon
 Kisses, which he used to know.

Pale his cheek, his eyes are dim,
 Sick he lies and like to die.
 Lute and harp, make dirge for him,
 Where the yellowing wood-leaves lie :
 Colder grows each noble limb ;
 Call, he cannot now reply.

Calm he lies in marble sleep,
 Shrouded round with branching yew :
 His sad eyes in slumber deep,
 Our sad eyes the tears bedew :
 For the Love-Lord, weep, O weep,
 Gather rosemary and rue.

AN ODE TO A STAR

SWEET weary pilgrim of the heavenly places,
 Star of the gray, pursuing rosy flight :
 Roaming the vast secluded planet spaces
 Among the spheres of night :

Thou art all silver-zoned, and radiant-breasted,
 Veiled round with refluent hair :
 Thy train is meteor dust, thy forehead crested
 With blue-gold beacon glare.

As beams, which from a leaden storm-rift curtain
 Silver the ocean gray :
 As a ship-light, that wrestles in the uncertain
 Furrows of shifting spray—

Thou wendest on, and wilt not die, tho' vapour
 Eat at thy heart, and haze
 Perplex thy dim refluctuant earnest taper,
 And shake its tortured rays.

Till for its toil it touch deep rest as payment,
Queen of its devious way.
As some fair child, rose-cheeked, with brightened raiment,
And fragrant-breathed as May.

Sweet shall it share then in its sisters' singing,
As a star only sings :
Where, round some palace, like bright swallows clinging,
Hang clustered angel wings :

Calm shall ungird its sandal-strings of going,
Fold its worn plumes of flight,
And sleek its breast against the overflowing
Fron dage of primal light.

Thus is my song, a lone and wandering meteor,
Roaming thro' cloud and breeze ;
As in a wild March morn the wave-worn wheatear
Scents haven overseas.

Song of a star, as from some censer shaken,
Thy perfumed incense blows,
And, rolled aloft, while lights auroral waken,
Reflects their purple glows.

VENGEANCE

My lady came in mournful plight,
And told me, how some courtly knight
Had gabbled o'er her blameless name
The censure of a shameless shame.

And, as she told his hideous lies,
And rainy sorrow brimmed her eyes,
Upon my sword, beside her laid,
She wept three tears against the blade.

A SERENADE

I raised the hilt, and, nothing loth,
 Upon its cross I swore an oath :
 My lips impressed the holy spot,
 The oath, then sworn, was not forgot.

Next morn, the sacred tears reveal
 Three rust-spots on the naked steel.
Now, there are other stains below,
 They are the life-blood of her foe.

A SERENADE

PEACE, where my love reposes,
 A shrine of slumber gray ;
 Let sleep repair her roses
 Torn by the stress of day
 Sleep, till orient skies
 Misty peaks discover,
 Calling back thy lover,
 Where afar he lies,
 Thy lonely lover.

When will my love awaken,
 And beam her light on me,
 Like a mighty sunbeam shaken
 On a dark and shuddering sea ?
 Drifts of fiery cloud
 Round the mountain smoulder
 Veils of sleep enfold her,
 Like a rosy shroud
 Around a rosy shoulder.

Peace be thine and blessing,
 A peace I cannot share,
 In troubled dreams caressing
 A phantom maid of air.
 Melt out, old night, and pass,
 And sow the mountain places
 With tufted primrose faces ;
 Then bring the real lass
 To my embraces.

THE SECOND MADRIGAL

Woo thy lass while May is here,
Winter vows are colder.
Have thy kiss when lips are near,
To-morrow you are older.

Think, if clear the throstle sing,
A month his note will thicken :
A throat of gold in a golden spring
At the edge of the snow will sicken.

Take thy cup and take thy girl,
While they come for asking.
In thy heyday melt the pearl,
At the love-ray basking.

Ale is good for careless bards,
Wine for wayworn sinners.
They, who hold the strongest cards,
Rise from life as winners.

INFATUATION

To dote upon some silent star for years,
Shrined in remotest galaxies above,
Will bring thee less remorse and fewer tears,
Than her cold scorn, harsh echo to thy love.

Rush to embrace the rainbow still retreating,
And at the fen-fire's flicker warm thy hand ;
Till marble-heart shall bring thee pleasant greeting
Go twist the sea-dunes into ropes of sand.

Why dost thou love this lumpish block of stone ?
Why gauge the pulses in that shallow breast ?
Why make thy fruitless suit, with such a moan,
As turtles mourn their raven-plundered nest ?

THE TOMB: AN ALLEGORY

Ask pity sooner from the hail, the cloud ;
 And bid the bitter wind spare sail and sea ;
 The clay-cold maid shall waken in her shroud,
 And bring her lips, ere thou bring thine, to me.

I may persuade the tiger from his hate,
 And make the viper gentler than the dove,
 And train a wolf as watch-dog at my gate,
 Ere thy flint heart respond one note of love.

Make, if thou canst, the ravening vulture kind,
 And call the kite to leave her carrion slain ;
 'Twill waste thy pains and harass less thy mind,
 Than sottish love and obdurate disdain.

THE TOMB: AN ALLEGORY

I SAW a woman with an infant stand
 Outside the portal of a vaulted tomb,
 And on its door were written words of doom,
 And a vast silence deepened o'er the land.
 Then, turning to that child, she gave command
 To kneel beside her at the gate of gloom,
 And lay before that charnel wreaths of bloom,
 And press those doors of death with kisses bland.

"I am the life that gave him to the grave :
 And this poor child, the pledge of our despair,
 On whom a father's smile might never dwell—
 Thou hero, whom immortals could not save,
 Tho' Love was sweet and Time was very fair,
 Thine be the lilies of the asphodel."

ANTICIPATION

I SET my heart to sing of leaves,
 Ere buds had felt the March wind blow :
 I laid my head and dreamt of sheaves,
 Ere seedsmen had the heart to sow :
 I fancied swallows at the eaves,
 And found old nests in pendent snow.

I dreamt a scent of daffodils,
When frosty shone the village tiles :
Of flowery perfume from the hills,
When ice had bound the mere for miles :
Of kingcups yellowing all the rills,
When snowdrift silted up the stiles.

I found a barren bush of thorn,
Where hung last year the sweet field-rose :
I said, no hint of purple morn
The chambers of the east disclose :
Poor heart, poor song, poor pinions torn,
Flutter and perish in the snows.

I said, a winter, huge and deep,
Crawls on the bitter, hungry plain :
Why should I dream, who cannot sleep,
Or hope to understand the pain,
Which rolls the doleful tears I weep,
That Spring is dead, that Love is slain ?

A CHURCHYARD YEW

BRIGHT levels of the wandering wave
Behind the russet sails,
How soon your burnish fails :
Soon die the damask-amber glows,
Isled on a galaxy of rose,
In splendid veils.

Sad yew-tree, sister of the grave,
Black upas nursed on death,
Thy root draws mandrake breath,
The windy branches creak, and tell
In what fat bitter soil they dwell,
Who sleep beneath.

Thy feet grim sloping gravestones pave :
Thy bole salt crystals smear
With scurf of briny tear :
Thy gnarled and torture-twisted form
Shrinks landward from the scathing storm,
Year after year.

A CHURCHYARD YEW

But here are girls and soldiers brave
Beneath the sods at calm :
And lovers here, whose psalm
The dismal silence long hath dulled,
And here is Sorrow lapt and lulled
In slumber's balm.

The robin whistles on a grave,
His throat with song distended ;
A butterfly has wended
To some *hic jacet*, where he clings
To close and open shuddering wings
With borders splendid.

Thou heedest not the wild bird's stave,
Old bitter broken tree,
Thou feedest not the bee.
Thou drawest from thy soil of blight
A deadly apathy, and Night
Environs thee.

Here, as the wild green breakers rave,
Thy berry, fleshed in red,
Hangs down its poisoned head ;
There squeaking bats in gloom carouse,
And, roosted in thy charnel boughs,
The owl's in bed.

The mole is working in her cave,
By glowworm taper shine,
She graveward drives her mine.
And, on a wreath of faded roses,
A lean old rat to these discloses
How he shall dine.

Cold stars above their glimmer save :
And haggard is the moon
To hear the raven's tune—
How soon must Love and Glory rust,
And rosy lasses come to dust
And slumber soon.

THE HAUGHTY LADY CONDEMNS LOVE
AND DESPISES PASSION

FALSE love, sweet love, false love, thy primrose lands
Are bitten by a sea that gnaws and stains :
False love, thy river may have golden sands,
Yet rocks it sighing on thro' flinty plains.
The low continual forest hears of love :
The cloud-crest tells the under lake of him.
He wakes the plaint of rainbow-breasted dove,
The glowworm lights her torch, his herald dim,
The March wind is his furious trumpeter,
The cuckoo is his clear remembrancer.
Yet will I nothing of this herdsman Love,
This god of bread and cheese,
This paragon of ploughgirls : at mine ease,
Saint and serene above
Their trivial kisses, with the stars I write
The oracles of God,
Sown on the windy pinnacles of night.
My Life shall be
An Alpine morning o'er a tideless sea
Of avalanches bright.
As some peak never trod,
Rosy and pure in crystal ether set,
And from the world's foundation icebound yet :
Auroral, sweet, and inaccessible,
That rock shall be my sign. The terrible
Hand of the Sun shall fall in harmless glows,
Nor melt one wreath of calm aërial snows ;
Not Titan's golden hour
Can melt my Danae tower :
Nor rain of richest beams
Unfreeze the frozen seams
Of ice and cloud, that veil me in my bower.
Fate gives me beauty, God has given me scorn.
I will be first or none :
To hew the wood of life I was not born ;
Flowers are my hands, my robe a tissue spun.
Shall I be jumbled up with market wives,
The herd and trash of maidens, who accept
Their long laborious lives,
Bewailing and bewept ?
And wear away their sordid household days,
Much as the steers, who pull the plough or graze.

I will not put my mouth up to some fool,
 And be unvirgined for the kiss of him.
 I will remain damsel of God, and rule
 My worst thought purer than the morning rim.
 I am locked up with God, and earthly yearning,
 In eyes as unresponsive to desire,
 Passes, as puppets in a peepshow turning,
 Gestures of painted passion, wood and wire.
 What is this homespun comedy of Love,
 Rank with the furrow-cleaving herdsman's toil?
 What is this vineyard lodge, this red alcove,
 Reed-roofed among the orchards of the oil?
 The floor is purple with the broken grape:
 The vats are foamed with ferment. Hand in hand,
 Red to the knee, each Bacchanalian shape
 Tramples the rich blood of the vineyard land.
 Or in some croft, half hid by rustic eaves,
 The milkmaid rests her pail among the leaves,
 And the pied stirk with comfortable sound
 Crops the abounding ground.
 There, if some uncouth Thyrsis chance to pass,
 He comes and sits him by this freckled lass,
 And puts his brows to hers, this cow-girl queen,
 Coarse-grained and stained with summer, as some
 green
 Crude orchard apple, striped abrupt in hue;
 And takes her rough hand fondly, where the grass
 Shoots up in timothies and ox-eyes too,
 And the rathe sorrel reddest of spring's crew;
 And heaven finds echoes in the speedwell's blue:
 And pale green spikes are everywhere around,
 And chirping things give sound,
 Hid in the ambush of the hay; the quail
 Is darnel-tangled, and the water-rail
 Cheeps from the mere befringed with galingale:
 And mighty Pan breathes o'er the vernal ground.
 So deep in grass, as two hid meadow birds,
 They sing again their threadbare song, whose words
 Are kisses: and in arrogance suppose
 Their horny rushlight lantern can enclose
 The radiant sun of demigod Desire.
 What is this fen-fire, framed of mud and mire?
 Love, what is Love, the solace of the clown,
 That makes the wise man frown?
 A ribbon in the milkmaid's frowsy hairs,
 A few dog-roses in a field of tares,

A little laughter and a long disdain ;
Blind and unfit to reign,
The deity of pain ;
Silenus of the swineherds is his name,
The ploughboy Eros with his face of shame,
His woolly coat, his sheepdog at his side ;
Shall I unlock to such a mongrel god
The porches of my pride,
Or my serene abode ?
Throned on the cloud above such earthborn coil,
I rule by right of beauty such as toil.
I am the lily without fleck or soil.
Avaunt, thou son of mire,
No Tempe gave thee birth ;
Ether I am and fire.
I rise as flame, I rise,
Above this atmosphere of sighs
Beyond the reek of earth :
And Pythoness aspire,
Helm'd with an angel's mirth :
Where star-dew steeps my beaming crest and hair,
Listening what cadence rare,
And on gross earth unheard,
The planets make in sphering. With what word
The morning star comes dripping back to God,
When he the sea at early morn has trod.
With what a beautiful clear even-song
Recurrent Vesper surges back among
The small pure rounded lights, which in the rain
Of light around him, pale and dumb, refrain
Their sparkling throng.
Shall I, whose meteor beauty makes the plain
Of the blue night mute with amazement, deign
To drop the corner of an eye at Love,
From golden spheres above ?

Take my disdain, false Love, and hence begone,
Stained with rude wreck and clay ;
Poor pipe of earthly passion, in whose tone
There only lives the discord of a day.
Leave me my isolation, grand and calm,
While fond adoring nations bend the knee,
Exclaiming, she is worthy of the palm,
As Dryad fair or mermaid of the sea.
Let their triumphant psalm
Acclaim me loveliest of the things that be.

Let them adore afar ;
 And worship, as they please :
 Love, if they choose ; but I am as the star
 Out of the reach of these.

THE TRAGEDY OF CHILDHOOD

FAIREST leaves of autumn spread
 To shroud with green these children dead ;
 Their early fate, their cruel doom,
 Might well require a nobler tomb :
 Alabaster might explain,
 Pompous verse rehearse their pain.
 Cherubs weeping stony tears,
 Time with scythe and Fate with shears,
 Slab of lapis, jasper border,
 Columns of Corinthian order ;
 Let no meaner shrine be here
 Than on the dust of cavalier.
 Nay, they need no trophies high,
 Grandeur in simplicity ;
 And their oft-repeated tale
 Is never old and never stale.
 All night long in evil case,
 Thro' thorny green and forest space ;
 Up and down, and far and wide,
 They wandered till they sank and died.
 Pitying on a hazel bough,
 Robin saw them sinking low.
 Came the wren, the whitethroat came,
 Came the bird of evil name ;
 Owl, and nuthatch, tit, and dove,
 Singers of the dirge of love.
 Will ye mourn them half as well
 With the peal of muffled bell ?
 With the organ march of Death,
 With the floated incense wreath,
 Chant and candle, cross and stole,
 As the *misereres* roll ?
 Here each tender baby lies
 Shrined with richer obsequies :
 Fairy leaves of aspen shed
 Treasure round these children dead,

Leaves of oak, and sprays of rue,
Cypress branches, boughs of yew.
And they want no marble tomb,
Where we may inscribe their doom ;
Where the Frost with icy fetters
Tears away the golden letters.
Where the rain rubs out the tale.
But their story shall not fail,
Shrined beyond the reach of chance
In golden childhood's first romance,
And on early Fancy's walls
Painted, where soft sunlight falls.

THE WINDMILL

DESOLATE windmill, eyelid of the distance,
Gaunt as a gibbet, ruled against the sky :
Rolling and rocking in the wind's persistence,
Thy black uplifted dome-house seems to fly :

Writhing its wings, as eagle Promethean,
Who tears the Titan on Caucasian height.
While all the gentle gods above sing pæan,
To see Jove's red-winged vengeance rend and smite.

Emblem of Life, whose roots are torn asunder,
An isolated soul that hates its kind,
Who loves the region of the rolling thunder,
And finds seclusion in the misty wind.

Type of a love, that wrecks itself to pieces
Against the barriers of relentless Fate,
And tears its lovely pinions on the breezes
Of just too early or of just too late.

The desolation of a moorland wasted,
An endless heath, half-tinged with reddening ling :
Gray bitter tracts which ploughshare never tasted,
Too sour to waken at the voice of spring.

These wiry roots revive not, when the zephyrs
Unclasp the budded fragrance on the thorn.
Not here shall come the sound of lowing heifers,
Not here shall heave the rippling waves of corn.

In thee, old mill, I see Ixion quiver,
Chained on a wheel in Acherusian deep,
Upon whose weary eyelids not for ever
Descends the healing balm of angel sleep.

I see some dragon-fly with wings outshadow
The current-dancing midge, whose murmur fails
Beneath the swooping tyrant of the meadow,
Bat-like and spectral, with loud latticed sails.

At eve thou loomest like a one-eyed giant
To some poor crazy knight, who pricks along,
And sees thee wave in haze thy arms defiant,
And growl the burden of thy grinding song.

Against thy russet sail-sheet slowly turning,
The raven beats belated in the blast :
Behind thee ghastly, bloodred Eve is burning,
Above, rose-feathered drifts are racking fast.

The curlews pipe around their plaintive dirges,
Thou art a Pharos to the sea-mews hoar,
Set sheer above the tumult of the surges,
As sea-mark on some spacious ocean floor.

My heart is sick with gazing on thy feature,
Old blackened sugar-loaf with fourfold wings,
Thou seemest as some monstrous insect creature,
Some mighty chafer armed with iron stings.

Emblem of man, who, after all his moaning,
And strain of dire immeasurable strife,
Has yet this consolation, all atoning,—
Life, as a windmill grinds the bread of Life.

ROLAND AT RONCESVALLES

ROLL up thy tardy legions, Charlemagne,
Haste to my succour : red in glory ride
The heaving furrows of the battle tide :
Advance, wipe out this pagan horde of Spain,
Whose rabble myriads crush me. In disdain
Thy paladins, thy chivalry have died.
They sleep unbroken in their ranks of pride,
And where they nobly fought, lie nobly slain.

Farewell, my gallant bugle-horn, farewell,
Come, let me wind thy martial note once more,
And peal one last, one loud despairing cry ;
Until the long reverberations swell,
To rock my death-dirge on the echoing shore,
And all the Fontarabian woods reply.

THE ABSENT MARINER

SAILOR of the hoary deep,
Thou art rolled from tide to tide.
I can watch the waves and weep :
Thou canst roam the ocean wide.
I tremble at the rising gale,
Yet in the calm I chide thy sail :
For not one ship on all the main
Can bring my true-love home again.

Over realms of restless foam,
Boundless breadths of heaving sea,
Rock, O wind, my rover home,
Zephyr, blow his sails to me.
Waft him on thy tender wing,
Like the long-delaying spring :
Till, safe in port, with anchor cast,
He folds me in his arms at last.

Month on month, he sailed away,
A speck upon the ocean line,
Melting in the rainy gray,
Cloud-like on the utmost brine.

A LAMENT

Autumn passed in discontent,
 Winter came and winter went.
 Day by day, I ponder dumb,
 Spring is here—Ah ! will he come ?

A LAMENT

YE waves that sweep the splendid deep,
 And crest the ocean gray,
 The voice of your eternal woe
 Dilates in sorrow, to and fro,
 With pulse of broken spray,

Upraise thy dirge, thou furrowy surge,
 Whereon the stormlight glows,
 Rock on the shining island side,
 And break with foam the crimson pride
 Of the half-opened rose.

From the grave gate a gust of Fate
 Blewn stern at Death's decree ;
 And underneath its icy power
 Lies withered, cold, the loveliest flower,
 That used to comfort me.

HODGE PROLOGIZES AT HIS PUBLIC

SCENE : A VILLAGE ALEHOUSE, NEAR A CHURCH SUR-
 ROUNDED BY A CHURCHYARD. A WINDMILL TURN-
 ING IN THE DISTANCE

SUN and shine,
 And ivy twine,
 Thirst is bad on a midsummer day.
 Sell thy flail
 For a stoup of ale,
 Shear thy lamb for a wisp of hay.

All over the church
 The little birds perch,
 And the graveyard is full as it well can be :
 Headstone and mound,
 And garden-like ground,
 And plenty to pay for the vicar's fee.

A buttermilk wench,
 And an alehouse bench,
 With plenty to drink and a little to see ;
 With a song and a pipe,
 Till we're reeling ripe,
 And let the blue ribbon go hang for me.

Sun and shine,
 And ivy twine,
 Honey is best from a mountain bee.
 The old black swift,
 He lives in a rift
 Under a beam of the Church roof-tree.

By the churchyard rail
 Is the house of ale,
 Settle and mugs and a sanded floor.
 A trough, where a sign
 (I wish it were mine)
 Creaks in the winds like a rusty door.

The sexton is nigh,
 And his work is dry ;
 And the chink of a glass is as good as a bell,
 To draw him inside
 And be quickly supplied,
 For he digs all the better for drinking a spell.

Sleet and hail
 On the windmill sail ;
 Nobody grudges the rats their flour.
 The mills of time
 Grind girls in prime :
 The wheels go round and the maid grows sour.

The red robin comes
 To pick up the crumbs.
 The wagtail runs nodding all over the lea.
 A gun for a bird,
 And a blow for a word,
 And a measureless score at the Chequers for me.

THE WINE OF LIFE

So my song it may pass,
 If you'll stand us a glass
 To the Church and the Queen : and plenty to eat,
 Oceans of drink,
 And never to think,
 And a good stiff tax on the foreigners' wheat.

THE WINE OF LIFE

HE best can drink the wine of Life,
 And sweetly crush the grape of Fate,
 Who shuts the Janus doors of strife,
 And binds an olive on his gate.

Who needs no victim to atone
 The record of his blameless hour ;
 Contentment is the corner stone
 On which he builds his arch of power.

He best enjoys who can refrain,
 He least is nimble Fortune's fool,
 Who sees his honest Duty plain,
 A scholar in her iron school.

How idle for a spurious fame
 To roll in thorn-beds of unrest :
 What matter whom the mob acclaim,
 If thou art master of thy breast ?

If sick thy soul with fear and doubt,
 And weary with the rabble din,—
 If thou wouldst scorn the herd without,
 First make the discord calm within.

If we are lords in our disdain,
 And rule our kingdoms of despair,
 As fools we shall not plough the main
 For halters made of syren's hair,

We need not traverse foreign earth
To seek an alien Sorrow's face.
She sits within thy central hearth,
And at thy table has her place.

So with this hour of push and pelf,
Where nought unsordid seems to last,
Vex not thy miserable self,
But search the fallows of the past.

In Time's rich tract behind us lies
A soil replete with root and seed ;
There harvest wheat repays the wise,
While idiots find but charlock weed.

There we can here the flute of Pan,
Bewailing down the reedy vales :
There see the tempest-beaten swan
Sail broken, down the moaning gales.

And larger heroes in that morn
Stride mist-like thro' the asphodel,
And hoary bards with cheeks unshorn
Invoke anew the lyric spell.

On me their burning helms they turn,
Their eagle banners awe the glen,
They, rising from each dusty urn,
Display their giant limbs again.

A broad cup brimmed with mighty red
These silent years to us assign ;
From old Falernian vineyards shed,
The Roman sends the Teuton wine.

Old Fauns have breathed against the grapes,
Old-world aromas haunt the bowl ;
Still music of forgotten shapes,
Dim pathos of a Pagan soul.

There from those dark and glimmering lands,
From altars wrecked with ivy trail,
Old Flaccus reaches out his hands,
And bids the mild barbarian hail.

ORPHEUS IN THRACE

ALL breathing men have trouble of their day.
Fate and the gods abhor prosperity
For us who live the wasting of an hour.
Yet I, that Orpheus, whose sole craft is song,
The mortal son of the immortal muse,
Claim to have vanquished all competitors ;
In endless desolation held supreme,
I bear the palm of sorrow's thorny road.
Man's common grief to my imperial pain
Seems like a puny gnat that pricks the skin,
Beside a python crushing in his coils
The very bones to pulp, a broken heap ;
Seems as a ripple to a cataract,
Seems as a dew-bead to a planet sphere.
O miserable bard, whose grinding woes
Drive him to wander with an aching heart
Thro' mountain fields and Thracian solitudes.
Loathing his fellow men, a life apart ;
Scorn in my soul against man's shallow race,
In trivial jars consuming narrow days,
Wailing and laughter, spite and vanities,
And as a robe they are folded and put away.

From the first quivering dawn-point in the gray
To the last purple foot-step in the cloud
Upon the road where Phoebus went to rest,
Thro' the long day and all its wasteful hours,
I wander like a phantom of myself.
Pale, hollow-eyed, immersed in utter gloom,
I peal my piteous passion to the crags,
And the pines hear me and the torrent-voice
Wails in with mine, concordant to my woe.
One theme the dawn, one theme the sunset brings,
The fierce noon blazing on the mountain walls
Explains no other sorrow ; the fair moon
Floated in many a star and fleeting cloud
Burns the same story on the brow of heaven.
One master-chord of grief is tyrannous,
And, without pity stifling, sweeps aside
The feeble notes which whisper nascent hope,
Soon turns the cadence back to grim despair ;
Until the lyre and its seven brother strings
Sound each a vocal tear, distinct in woe :

As when the urns of heaven come pouring down
 Against the full-leaved heaving forest-sheets,
 And the woods drip with quick perpetual throb,
 Mocking the semblance and the sound of tears
 And seem responsive to my streaming eyes.
 My faltering hand in many a broken pause,
 My heaving breast in many a gasping sob,
 Divulge a loss, which tears have never sounded,
 Deep-welling from the fountains of my life,
 An agony which words are dumb to tell,
 Which only music, sovereign to express
 The supreme desolation of despair,
 Unveils by gleam and glimpse in ruinous deeps,
 A mind that crumbles like a wasted crag
 Into a midnight of unfathomed chasm,
 Ragged, abrupt, another Taenarus.
 Why should I wither slowly, inch by inch?
 Where is this laggard Death? No stranger he,
 Familiar is his face, and day by day
 I have burnt incense in his gloomy shrine.
 He comes to those who prosper and fare well.
 I am not worth the raising of his hand;
 The young, the good, the lovely are his prey.

I am become as some pale, rotten weed
 Beside a stagnant marsh, whose matted floors
 Reek up polluted vapours; leaf by leaf
 I drop to dust, and round my sapless roots
 The horror of a black and staining mire
 Festers, and tho' the attributes of life
 Survive, I perish piecemeal in my wane,
 As one long dead, forgotten out of mind
 Among the dusty brethren of the grave.
 I am withered from my old identity,
 O! I am changed, for as no man believes
 That this sere leaf which in October hangs
 Can be the same with May's redundant shoot,
 Can this same Orpheus of the grand attempt
 Be one with this weak palsied nerveless thing
 Stumbling along the granite glens of Thrace,
 Perplexed with aimless fear and girded round
 With walls of apprehension, woebegone
 And trembling at the movements of the trees,
 When the wind gently stirs the stagnant noon?
 How can I be that greatly daring bard,
 Armed with his lyre and armoured with his love,

Who went among the torments of the dead,
Who saw calm-eyed, with visage well composed,
Dire emanations, shapes intensely foul,
Worse than the dream of fever brings the brain,
Horrors, abortions, lemures, vampires, ghosts?
I faced them all to save my well-beloved,
To bring her back to nature, whom the snake
Plucked down to Orcus. There stern Hades sat,
His shaggy brow ridged in reluctant frown
At my request, glooming an angry nay,
Until I made the mighty Queen of Hell
Weep like a maiden, and the fluttering ghosts,
Who had forgot emotion could recall
Some faded touches of their human heart,—
Love, Ire, and Sorrow that build up a soul.
So music won my wish. They gave her back,
And thro' the roads of torment we returned
Up to the light. Conditions Orcus made,
Easy conditions surely. Woe is me!
And she behind me, trembling like a child,
Came closely, as a timid infant clings
Fast to the mother's skirt, whose homeward steps
Lie o'er a darkling waste as eve shuts in.
And all went well till on the edge of light,
In sight of golden safety and love secured,
I faltered; agony it seemed to wait
A moment longer; such a flood of love
Conquered my soul to see once more the light
Beam in those dearest eyes, to hear her breathe,
To catch one glimmer of her glancing robes.
Fool to forego restraint, ere I had won
All with my patience, fool to falter then,
For mighty Love took part against himself,
And his intensity became a spear
To pierce his own true heart with pangs of doom;
And in an instant I had turned and gazed.
Then from the deeps of Orcus far below
Came up the muttered thunder, and the abyss
Trembled at my transgression. All was lost.
She with a shriek cast upwards piteous arms
And down the gloomy chasm slipt slowly back,
And as she faded dim in veils of gloom
To me were spread her ineffectual hands
For aidance from the wide engulfing void,
Fruitlessly spread, and as she faded, came
These piteous accents, and her voice was changed

To thin and strange as might a shadow speak ;
"O love, what madness slays thy heart and mine ?
I am torn from thee by relentless fate
And Death is heavy on my drowsy eyes
Which see thee and which love thee while they may
An instant, ere I fleet into the shades,
Veiled in a mantle of eternal night
And filmy staining of the wasteful grave.
And now farewell, my love, for thine no more
Towards thee I reach my ineffectual hands
Fruitlessly reached as slowly I recede,
Such drowsy sleep involves my hapless form.
Loving, I pass to that dim land, where Love
Comes not, nor any comfortable beam ;
Thy bride no more : oblivion plucks me down.
Hail ! Love, my weak hand wafts thee long farewell,
Touching the lips that never shall be thine."

Then as a misty wreath of waterish haze
Melts in the sombre background of the woods
That make a midnight with their crowded shafts
Where pines uprear a labyrinth of spears,—
She spake and faded piteous from my view ;
A whisper and a rustle and she was gone,
As some sere leaf drifts down the chasm dire,
And gone for aye, irrevocably gone.
Then all my love and all my perilous road
Seemed like a fruitless beating of the air,
And all my daring, all my lyric skill
Issued in this supreme calamity.
Ah, wasted toil, and valour thrown away !
What could I do there at the cavern mouth,
But pore upon its depths in blank despair ?
No second ingress Taenarus allows.
The gloomy ferry-man, propitious once,
Refuses stern a second living freight.
What penalty could Hades not impose
If once again I fought my furious way
Back to the fiery throne ?

Hope faded fast,

And all my soul grew sick with giant grief ;
Yet months I loitered near the pass of pain,
Sustaining life on roots and bramble fruit.
Hopeless at last, dead to the heart and dazed,
I wandered northwards to the Thracian wolds,
By gentle streams, deep vales and spacious hills,

A region fair tilled by an evil race,
Who live as dogs live brutish wrangling days,
And pasture beeves, and shear a patch of maize,
And crush a grape sour-hearted into wine,
Herdsmen and thieves when chance arrives to steal.
And their fierce matrons, they who rear this race,
The very dregs and lees of womanhood,
Are Mænads stained by wind and tanned by glare,
Crude faces furrowed by a hundred storms,
And harsher than the panic-screeching jay
Peals out each shrewish voice from field to field,
With hideous laughter, foul, abominable.
And these dare offer to me their fierce love,
And, when repulsed with loathing, they depart
With clamour and wild menace of revenge,
And when the grape-god's festal day arrives,
They indulge their thirsty humour, calling this
Religion, and inflamed with new made wine
Bestial they rush with howlings o'er the hills
Maddened and fierce as tigers cub-bereaved.
Surely a wise god this, one worshipped well,
To tear and ruin, yell and soak and fling
Their limbs abroad and rend their scanty robes !
The inspiration of a noble cult !
The holy priest of Bacchus hounds them on
With twinkling eye and shining hairless pate,
A bull-faced stunt Silenus spider-bellied,
Whose girdle-clasps scarce meet across his paunch,
His exhortations what the Mænads rage.
He names them pious daughters ripe for heaven,
He tells them, if they only drink enough,
Like Ariadne they will turn to stars
And beam their radiance on the nightly world :
That the red ruin by a god inspired
Out-weighs a cold and barren rectitude.
On me the special fury of their scorn
Descends, because my solitary days
Insult their love and flout their vinous charms.
My grief disturbs their chorus to the grape,
Their orgies are a loathing to my soul ;
For all which slights they one day vow revenge.
The vengeance of a maddened Mænad takes
A hundred forms : I know not which will come.
Perhaps to hale me like a tethered steer
In drunk procession to a drunken god,
And slay me with a sacrificial hymn.

A grievous ending ; yet my life has sunk
 Lately to such a fathomless despair,
 That I should welcome even the flamen's knife
 To balm the edge of my calamity.
 If death be slumber, I shall surely dream
 That I am walking with Eurydice.
 If death be wakeful, and I know it is,
 I shall arise and joyous greet her there,
 And shade and shadow we will mix and greet.

August 11th, 1895.

NAPOLEON THE GREAT

*While the happy fields repose
 In a border of wild rose,
 And the meadow mantle glows
 Like a flower,*

*As I pace this woodland glade
 Visions come and visions fade
 Of the wars Napoleon made
 And his power.*

FRANCE

How from mean estate he came,
 On the splendid plumes of Fame
 To the Sun's imperial flame
 Soaring proud,

As a champion of romance,
 He has breathed his soul on France,
 And she started from her trance
 And her shroud.

Soon the Consul's laurels fade
 Into Cæsar's purple shade ;
 No such lord of battle blade
 Came before.

With his foot on Fortune's wheel
Europe whimpers at his heel,
By the right of blood and steel
Emperor.

Scale o'er Alps and bridge the Rhine,
Burst thy barriers, Apennine !
Shall such puny bounds confine
His renown ?

He has conquered south and east,
Kings attend him at his feast,
Of his Marshals yet the least
Wears a crown.

But the Ocean curbs his sail,
Tho' by land his sword prevail :
" Brine-ward let his glory fail ! "
Fate decrees.

Useless fleets he builds in sight
Of the Forts on Dover's height,
Hated Albion rides in might
On the seas.

Sullen in his icy lair,
Bides the yet unvanquished Bear,
And he mocks at Cæsar's chair,
Sown with bees.

INTERLUDE

*Here are lambs on frolic feet,
Here are miles of ripening wheat,
And the ploughboy carols sweet
To his team.*

*Safe inside our narrow seas,
Who invades our English peace ?
But the foes of Britain cease
Like a dream.*

MOSCOW

Let the roofs of Moscow burn,
Till the Czar of Moscow learn
Sheeted winter cannot turn
Back his fate.

Onward, on, the legions go ;
Shall Napoleon dread the snow ?
Let the chidden Cossack know
We are great.

Nay, but see the eagles there
Slow retreating in despair,
See the General, white with care,
Ride before.

Rime is on that rider bold,
Rime is on the eagle's gold,
Rime upon the standard's fold,
Crisp and hoar.

INTERLUDE

*Miles of purple orchard fruit
Weigh the bough and strew the root.
From the mere one ringdove's lute
Wakes the shore.*

*Sheep bells tinkle far behind,
Like hushed echoes on the wind,
Breathing peace to human kind
Evermore.*

WATERLOO

Then there rise upon my view
Those gray flats of Waterloo,
Where the red men met the blue
Like a wall ;

Legions flashing in the sun,
Sabre clash, and vollied gun,
Till the world our Wellesley won
From the Gaul.

Then the clarions gave their peal,
 Then the wrestling squadrons reel,
 Silent in their ranks of steel
 Soldiers bled.

Then, as clouds of gathering night,
 Blucher's morions massed the height,
 And the tyrant at the sight
 Turned and fled.

Over faces of the slain,
 Through the cannon-cumbered plain,
 Ah, he never turned again
 To his dead !

All his retinue of kings
 Melt on panic-stricken wings,
 While his dying trooper sings
 Marseillaise.

Mighty Captain, King of Rome,
 Mourn thine eagles stamped in loam,
 Rifled barn and ruined home,
 Ricks ablaze.

Fly by sacked and burning farms,
 Fly by riddled windmills' arms,
 In the nightmare and alarms,
 Of thy pride.

By the endless poplar lines,
 By the trampled corn and vines,
 In the crash of great designs
 Let him ride.

INTERLUDE

*See, the hawkmoths in the wheat
 Kiss the roses' faces sweet,
 At the violet's sapphire feet,
 Kneeling low.*

*Hark ! the thirsty crickets cheep
 To the poppy, queen of sleep,
 Till the field mice peer and peep,
 Soft as snow.*

ST. HELENA

He's thy captive, England, now !
Ah ! undiadem his brow,
Chain him to thy galley prow
Like a thief.

Let thy warship cleave its way
To the far meridian day,
Let the wild Atlantic spray
Guard the chief.

Soon I see the barren rock
Where the island breakers shock.
Here with arms that interlock
He looks down ;

As a broken eagle torn
On the whirlwind of the morn,
Comes to die and dies in scorn
With a frown ;

As that Titan, with the smart
Of the vulture at his heart,
Feels his limbs already part
Of the tomb,

Feels the slow sepulchral stain,
Inch by inch, on grinding pain,
March against his heart and brain,
In the gloom,

Scanned by grim and jealous foes,
Keen to chronicle his woes,
And to watch him as he goes
To his doom.

INTERLUDE

*Merry school-girls thro' the woods
Scamper in their russet hoods,
Happy mothers watch their broods
In the nest.*

*Comes a robin without dread,
Piping on a cart-house shed,
Where a rowan ripens, red
As his breast.*

A PARTING

THE INVALIDES

Last I see the pageant slow,
 And all France in weeds of woe
 Lays the laurel, bending low
 To his car.

Now in death's imperial state
 Once again this King is great
 And beyond the reach of Fate
 And of war.

So he sleeps upon his bed,
 With the great enduring dead,
 And the cannon round his head
 Peal him home ;

As he heard them many a day
 In his riding-coat of gray,
 When the battle rolled away
 Like the foam.

CONCLUSION

*Thus I sat to meditate
 And to muse upon the fate
 Of Napoleon the Great
 And his peers ;*

*Till I thought I heard the drum,
 And the cannon seemed to come
 With a long mysterious hum
 Thro' the years.*

A PARTING

COLD in the wintry gorges hangs the snow,
 Keen through the withered woods the north winds blow
 One rift of sun-ray falls with frigid beam,
 And crisping ice makes sad the wimpling stream,
 While deep in drifts the devious roads are dumb
 Ere day has come.

Thy lips are colder than a wintry morn,
And as hate so is love that turns to scorn.
Time in the wreck of ages rolling by
Must teach the pretty puny god to die,
And for our parting, since our lips are dumb,
The day has come.

O wasted love, whose bright and rosebud bloom
Must turn to dusty chambers of the tomb !
O ruined rose, that made the morning red,
Pass to the pallid precinct of the dead,
And for our parting, since our lips are dumb,
The end has come.

The sun is low ; the night draws in apace ;
And tear-like clouds hang on the sunset face.
Grief has pulled down our golden days, my lass,
Like a green windfall in the orchard grass.
Of all love's banquet have we kept a crumb,
Now the end has come ?

Wasted and worn that passion must expire,
Which swept at sunrise like a sudden fire
Across the whitened crest of happy waves.
Now lonely in a labyrinth of graves,
His footsteps foiled, his spirit bound and numb,
Gray Love sits dumb.

Shall we bewail in ashes, O my sweet,
How lame our youth where once he journeyed fleet ?
Shall we lament this love that comes and goes ?
'Tis but the petal of a bramble-rose.
Of all our kisses sure the end has come.
Love's lute be dumb !

THE STOIC'S CREED

HOARD not up the yellow dross,
Spurn the deadly discs of gold ;
Let the miser turn and toss
Sleepless on his wealth untold.

THE STOIC'S CREED

Life requires a crust of bread,
A bowl of wine, a dish of meat.
Wilt thou toil thyself half dead
To pile a heap thou canst not eat?

Who would break his rest to guard
What a thief can steal away?
Will thy ducats bring reward
To dim eyes or hair of gray?

Of thy hoard what lust abides,
When to end thy selfish greed
Comes the bony knight who rides
Dark upon his steel-white steed?

Will thy money-bags avail,
Speak him soft and gain reprieve?
Then thy gold will melt and fail
As Danaid's water thro' the sieve.

Will thy bullion beam as bright
To palsied grasp and horny eye,
In the horror of the night,
When Cræsus hears the doom to die?

Honest work will bring enough ;
Work, and have no further heed.
Life is made of sterling stuff,
Love expands a nobler creed.

Purple fleeces scare repose :
Slumber loves the cabin door :
To sleep exempt from care and foes,—
'Tis the treasure of the poor.

Fate with blameless mind defy ;
Rest and Labour, wisely blent,
Bring with happy usury
The increase of a fair content.

THE LAMENT OF ECHO

SOLE in the vale, along the shelving crags
By lone reverberant quarries and deep scaurs,
Where the full river, coiling like a snake,
In loop and reach reverted on itself,
With long meandering desultory march,
Pushes its languid current towards the sea
And trifles with the flowers upon its rim,
Loosestrife and kex and spear grass, cliffs above
Rearing their cumbrous woods o'er dark ravines ;
There along shelf and gallery I pass
With foot as light as the dew-spider's thread,
And listen, listen, listen, ah ! for whom ?
I lean my ear against the rifted side
Of granite chasms, porches of Acheron.
My feet fear not the crumbling gray defile,
They clamber where the mountain breaks in shards
And tumbles all in weathered fragments down.
I wind, light-footed as the mountain goat,
By slippery tracks and sheep-cotes tenantless,
Once walled, now broken and ruined long ago,
Built by the herdsmen of the dawn, whose dust
Is scattered on the hills : primeval folds,
Whereat once bleated Sire Deucalion's sheep,
I thread them like the shadow of a dream.
I search the clefts and crannies of the rocks,
I search and yet I find not, woe is me !
Hera has laid this curse upon my lips,
That I am dumb until one speaks to me.
I, Echo most forlorn and shadowy nymph,
Abiding in my whispering solitudes,
Lovelorn and broken with stern Hera's hate,
Consume my barren prime, which bears no bud.
I pass, the glitter of a half-seen robe,
I pass, the whisper of a half-heard voice,
An ineffectual cuckoo of the rocks,
Here, there, close to, then half a vale away.
I pine and wane in my decrepitude,
Sick with a wasting flame that dries my soul,
Sick with the haunting face of the hill-boy,
Whom I pursue with yearning infinite,
And wither for his beauty and his grace.
He is beyond the hyacinth and rose

In loveliness : such clustered ringlets hang
Around his brow ambrosial : such a flush
Mantles the flower-like burnish of his cheek.
O my Narcissus, never to be mine !
Immeasurably barriered from my love
By the half childish vengeance of this god,
Who plays with wreck and ruin, as a boy
Delights to break the plaything of an hour.
And me the slow death of long love-despair
Wastes with insidious poison to a shade,
And he disdains me and I pine disdained ;
For to the solstice beam of my desire
He is cold and wintry, as the turbid wave,
Wherein his sire Cephissus, king of floods,
Holds oozy state and sun-sequestered rule,
Under his palace roof of floating weeds.
Me such a net of vengeance Hera weaves,
And Fate has made Narcissus this award,
Lovely she made him with a lavish hand,
Loveless she made him with an iron heart.
His eyes are keen to track the hunted roe,
But to the colour of all love are blind.
Love may not whisper in his dullard ear,
And kisses wander from his perfect lips
In an eternal exile far aloof.
I hear thy horn thro' dewy valleys wound,
Far in the distant morn : I hear thy voice
Calling thy hounds to breast the roe-buck's trace.
I hear and I reply, for my sealed lips
Are given the power to mimic with their sound
Thy mountain music. O my hunter love,
The gods who grudge me much at least give this,
And to the challenge of thy ringing shout,
The sudden-noted bugle at thy side
I can flute back a tender weird reply.
This is the only talk allowed my love ;
When other maids can interchange long vows,
And know the taste of kisses, I know none.
O ! were I but a fleet-foot hunting hound
To be thy patient comrade of the chase,
To dog thy active steps from dawn to dusk,
As thy poor shadow, and thou my Phœbus fair,
The darkness I, projected in the beam
Behind the splendid footsteps of my lord,
Shade of thy path, hound—anything with thee,
To do thee humble service as a dog,

And watch thine eyes for fragments, till thou toss
 Some careless crumbs of favour to my mouth,
 And I would guard thy worn and wearied sleep,
 Tired with the rapture of the long wet glades.
 Beautiful love, breathe on my anguished heart,
 Which pines as drougthy fallow for the rain,
 As faint the larchwoods for ambrosial dews ;
 Renew me with thy love so long withheld.
 Why should stern Hera gloom with fateful brows,
 And curse me for Olympian jealousies ?
 If Zeus grow weary of her hateful arms,
 Why should I pay the forfeit, love-amerced ?
 If thou wilt love me, all her anger fails,
 And rosy days replace her baffled ire.
 If thou art obdurate and scorn me still,
 Some Nemesis will seize thee in its toils ;
 For not on me alone this bolt will fall.
 And if I pine and wither and fade away,
 If as a floating wreath I haunt these hills
 And melt a phantom voice on eddying gale,—
 Lo, I predict, for my great sorrow and doom
 Unveil the future's landscape partly clear,
 And they who die speak with prophetic truth,
 I can discern from dayspring realms remote
 Drifted to thee a cloud of death so strange
 As never ended love and lover yet.
 Such Até from my ashes will arise,
 And all my beauty will be as a curse
 To drag thee down to Acheronian doors.
 I know not how, yet surely this shall be.

July 21st, 1895.

THE SPEAR OF ACHILLES

"Così od' io, che soleva la lancia
 D' Achille e del suo padre esser cagione
 Prima di trista, e poi di buona mancia."
Inf. xxxi., 3-6.

HE whom the spear of great Achilles tore
 Lingered and pined in anguish from the wound.
 One remedy in all the world was found,
 Rust from the mighty spear which stung so sore.

436 ON A QUEEN'S PALACE IN RUINS

Such mystic might the barb heroic bore,
That he who balm'd with it the wound around
Rose in a week with body whole and sound,
A better warrior than he was before.
So thou beneath whose piercing word I pine,
Thou whose unkindness, keen as thrust of spear,
Has giv'n me hopeless nights and weary days,
Let me find leechdom in thy smile divine,
And love for lingering hate and iron fear,
Then I shall strongly rise to sound thy praise.

ON A QUEEN'S PALACE IN RUINS

(QUEEN JOAN OF NAPLES, 1370-1435.)

DAUGHTER of the silver foam,
Show me now thy ruined shell !
Here was once thy radiant home,
Here thy palace citadel,

Glorious on thy brow with pride :
Gleaming limbs of rosy hue ;
Naked breasts too fair to hide,
Sweet as asphodelian dew.

Mighty captains came and quaffed
Deep the cups of thy desire,
Kings sat at thy feet and laughed :
Cupid watched and fanned the fire.

Time went merrily, my queen,
As a god they held thee then,
Ruling with disdainful mien
Circe-like thy droves of men.

Like a sunset flashing gems,
Fair thy orient couch was spread ;
But to kiss thy garment-hems
Drave thy lovers well-nigh dead.

Lying there, as Danæe lay
 Crushed in rain of rushing gold,
 When the god's resistless way
 In treasure on her bosom rolled ;

Like wan leaves in crisping bowers
 Spreads thy wilderness of hair,
 Near the faces of the flowers
 Where thy regal footsteps were,—

Hair that drank the light and noon
 With its multitude of threads ;
 Thou wast as an amber moon
 Which a cloud-fleece round her sheds.

Thou wast like a daffodil
 Wreathed in veils of misty dawn,
 When thy women at thy will
 Wrapt thy limbs in gold and lawn,

Underneath the gray wych elms,
 By the sobbing hungry sea.
 Voyaging to twilight realms
 Crowding sail for love of thee,

As a heron with hoarse cries,
 Came their white keels cleaving on,—
 As thro' clear meridian skies
 Southward sweeps the soaring swan.

Pirate kings that loved the brine,
 Helmed with dragons o'er their brows,
 Pledged thee in enchanted wine,
 Sweeter than their northern spouse.

But thy feasting hall is gone,
 And thy lovers quaff no more,
 And the boats that bore them on
 Rot on some sequestered shore.

WHAT THE BIRD SINGS

All thy rippling tresses rust,
Silent are thy dove replies,
And immeasurable dust
Stains the glory of thine eyes.

Daughter of the ocean foam,
Broken is thy beauty's spell,
Fallen is thy golden home,
Ruined all thy citadel !

WHAT THE BIRD SINGS

SUMMER bird why dost thou linger
In the blooming hawthorn spray?
Thou the centre and the singer
Of the deep enamelled May !

Carol out thy close of splendour—
Climax of melodious sounds,
Till the marriage chorus tender
From a dozen nests resounds.

As the year grows crisp and crisper,
Blows the musk-rose most divine,
And there floats ambrosial whisper
From the ringdove in the pine.

Like a host in midnight shrouded
Labyrinths of pine advance,
Gloomy orders ranked and crowded
With innumerable lance.

Give me glimpses how thy meaning
To the listening woods is told,
Mighty tides of concord streaming
From a pipe of liquid gold.

My dull ear can never capture
Half the import of thy strain,
Pathos widening into rapture,
Pleasure sharpening into pain,

Welcome to expanding nature,
When the balmy hours' caress
Fills with love each breathing creature,
Blessing as the angels bless.

Doth a moss-lined nest in lonely
Bough secluded, draw thy wing,
Where she waits, thy bird-love, only
Waiting thee in all the spring?

Build the walls and thatch the cover
Where the richest roses hang :
She shall sit and watch her lover,
Singing as he never sang,

Singing how the balmy season
Sheds the dewdrop's pearly shower,
Telling Love the only reason
Which unsheathes the golden flower,

As the lapse of silver fountains
Chimes among the braes of fern,
When the flakes of snow-fed mountains
Melt and roll a louder burn.

Peace and pleasure, love and passion,
Joy in sun and zephyr's kiss,
Thou in no uncertain fashion
Canst, O Bird, interpret this.

I believe this powerful measure,
As the incarnate voice of spring,
Moves the blooms to ope their treasure
And expands each petal-wing.

I believe the buds in slumber
Hear thy voice and heed thy call,
And that bluebells without number
Pave the woods where thy notes fall.

THE END OF A DELUSION

Rear thy brood in safe seclusion,
Till beyond the nest they range,
Happy in thy bird delusion
That this spring-tide cannot change.

August 31st, 1895,

THE END OF A DELUSION

STEEP, steep in Lethe's stream
Thy brows, thou barren Dream,
Delusion cease !
The fibres of my heart
Ache, from thy poisoned dart
I claim release.

There is no sting so dire
As waking in the mire
Of passion past ;
When dripping woods decay,
And branch-leaves drift away
In frozen blast ;

When the crisp elmwood groans,
And the swift river moans,
Presaging doom.
And as the bough lies shed
In clay, our troth is dead
And laid in tomb.

There is no grief so loud
As winding in her shroud
Love dead, once dear ;
There is no mock of pain
So bitter as disdain,
Which shames its tear.

In wasted glen and grove,
Wild creek and wintry cove
There blooms no rose ;
And on the leafless bowers
Thorns are the only flowers
The season knows.

How came my hand to find
A bane so sweet, designed
To bring regret?
What deep delusion wove
The toils of tangled Love
With red thorn set?

Deep in the raptured May
I wound my careless way
By garden grove ;
There perfumed bowers disclose
The fresh and fragrant rose
Of heedless Love.

It seemed a wondrous thing,
This burnished bud of spring
So dainty fair ;
The vermeil gloss of morn,
The breath of scented thorn
Suffused it there.

To my supreme surprise,
It seemed a perfect prize,
And wholly mine :
I swept the chords of praise
In pæan of Love's ways
And flower divine.

I kissed its petal-cheek,
I fondled, vain and weak,
A month—a moon ;
Yet o'er my halting lyre
Some note of false desire
Rang out of tune.

Beneath thy rose-leaf reign
The petals fell amain,
Until wind-torn,
The mirage, rolled away,
Disclosed thy feet were clay,
Thy lips foresworn.

A CRADLE SONG

The waking pang was strong :
 The true-love of old song
 Was never born :
 But we are mocked with glows
 And hints of Anterôs,
 Like spurious morn.

O Lethe, balm of shame,
 Wipe out this hateful flame,
 This bane of breath,
 Since for a pinch of dust
 I gave my soul in trust
 To Siren Death.

September 14th, 1895.

A CRADLE SONG

SLEEP, my son, my baby sleep,
 Mother watches by thy bed ;
 Be thy slumbers sound and deep,
 Softly rock the cradle head.

As I watch thy dreaming face,
 I picture from thy tender span
 How this rosy infant grace
 Will harden to the perfect man.

I pray that heaven may send thee, dear,
 The treasure of a loving wife,
 The glory of a grand career,
 The honour of a blameless life.

Thou shalt be a warrior good,
 Strong of arm and keen of eye,
 To the ruler of thy blood
 Faithful to thy latest sigh.

Thou shalt ride a gallant steed,
 On thy shield the sun-ray glows,
 As thy broadsword, good at need,
 Deals around triumphant blows.

Or in senate thou art great,
Wise in tongue and cool in brain,—
A prop and pillar of the state,
In thy monarch's council-train.

Thine shall be the potent word
To bid the fretful factions cease ;
As, binding olive round the sword,
Thy hand revives the plenteous peace.

Guide of the wise, the true man's trust,
Captain and statist, loyal friend,
Thou wilt not let the silence rust
Thy fame, nor falter to the end.

I see thee bowed in honoured age,
With children's children at thy knee ;
And thy renown a golden page
In the land's happy history.

I see, my son, thy crescent ray
Hereafter in the distant years,
When my warm mother-heart is clay,
And silence seals my hopes and fears.

'Twill be my sole and great reward
To have born a hero to my race :
Nor in this solace is it hard
To sleep below the daisy's face.

My vision ends : my darling wakes ;
I kiss to calm his wakeful wails.
Beyond the hill the morning breaks,
The waning taper flickering fails.

The noise of birds is just begun,
And mingles with the cradle cry—
O grant me, Heaven, my infant son
May nobly live and nobly die !

THE SICK FLOWER

THE SICK FLOWER

HANG thy head, O gaudy flower,
Droop thy petals, droop and fade !
Winter sweeps the ruined bower,
Tempest rolls o'er glen and glade.

Born a bud in balmy May,
Broad and strong in sequent June,
Waning in October gray,
Like a dull and dying tune.

Sick thou art, thy prime is o'er ;
Never shall the roving bee
Come for nectar at thy door,
Thy cup will cease to load his knee.

Thy mantle fine of fairy leaves
To ruined lace the wire-worms drill ;
His liquid nest the froth-fly weaves,
The weevil bites his bitter fill.

O hadst thou gained a daisy's birth,
Or risen a globe of clover small,
Thou hadst not gone to mother earth
In such a tattered funeral !

Thou hadst not soiled in woodland clay
The record of thy ampler hour,
O waning love, O setting day,
O last-drawn breath of dying flower !

The homely cheek that bore no blush
Fades gently at the touch of pain ;
But now to mock thy roseate flush
Some harsh and tawdry tints remain.

Thy face is like some shipwrecked star,
Which looks from heaven with dim desire,
But cannot dart one beam afar,
For chill grows all her spheral fire.

O ruined blossom ! pine and weep,
And let thy dewdrop tears rain fast ;
Pass gently to thy flowerless sleep,
Dirged by the bitter autumn blast.

September 16th, 1895.

AN ELEUSINIAN CHANT

HONEY and milk and bread and wine,
The mystic chest unlades its store,
The needs of men and the life divine,
Honey and milk and wine and bread.
We touch our foreheads to the floor,
We from the cup libations pour,
We smite with steel the sacred swine,
We trebly bar the temple door.
For she sits, she sits in the inward shrine
In a garden gown and a wheaten crown.
Stand apart ! ye non-elect,
Ere our mysteries begin.
He only keeps his soul erect,
Who is clean from soil of sin.
As the garment, which ye wear,
Let your mind be pure as snow ;
To those who love and those who dare
The mighty mother is not slow
To bring illumination near,
To melt the veil, unwrap the night
And flood upon the eye and ear
The sights of dread and sounds of might.
Ye alone shall gaze in fear
Whose eyes are ready for the sight ;
Ye alone shall trembling hear
Whose minds can fathom depth and height ;
And ye alone shall peep and peer
To astral circle, crystal sphere,
Till the deaf man shall hear
And the blind man gain light.

Let the priestly choir
Raise their droning song,
Voices scaling higher,
As the hymn grows strong,
Shawms and flute and lyre.

AN ELEUSINIAN CHANT

Let the augur's throng
Feed the sacred fire,
Beat the drum and gong ;
Let the cymbals ring.
Let the censer swing
Till it cloud the fane
Like the amethyst
Veils that floating wane
Above the hilly violet crest
That crowns the Attic plain.
But now the pipes refrain
And let the lyres desist
Their wailing strain.

Now come the rites of fire,—
The cleanser of the world,—
Rose-coloured flames mount higher,
In quivering spiral curled ;
Now the storax burns
And burns the resin slow,
Now the ember turns,
And gently breathing blow
Frankincense and myrrh,
Ambergris and gum.
Pray the while to her,
Whose ghostly garments come
Sweeping the marble floor.
O make the pavement sweet
As daffodils to bear
Touch of the holy feet !
Now pause in silence dumb,
And hardly draw your breath,
Until the symbol come,
To mention which is death ;
The emblem of a vast
Application, mighty sign
Of awful chrisam cast
Upon a brow divine,
And beads of sorrow fast
Falling from eyes that pine.
The weird of her we praise,
Who makes the harvest grow.
Approach and trembling gaze
Upon the mother's woe.
Who is she that sits

In long concluded days,
On a boulder stone,
By the bulrush pits?
Who is she that weeps,
Weeping for her daughter,
Making grievous moan
By the Attic water,
Broken and alone?
Hunger in the land,
Hope of harvest slain :
Mildew, smut and rust,
Ears of blighted grain,
Clouds of poisoned dust :
Kine that cannot graze,
Tainted herd and steer
Dying in the ways :
Shepherds pale with fear.
Goes a wail on high
From hamlets lacking bread.
The soil is parched and dry,
No seed will germinate
The germs of life are dead.
Some god with scathing hate
In this our Attic home,
Hath moved the wheels of Fate
And cursed it, glebe and loam.
Why hath this terror come?
What trespass hath been ours
That the seasons lose their date,
That spring forgets her powers?
Curse the cause of all this ill,
Curse Ascalaphus, the owl,
Blabbing tongue and bitter skill
To watch and pry, to peep and prowl :
With our sign we curse him—thus :—
Fowl of hell, Ascalaphus,
Feather-fledged, with large round eyes.
Perish thus officious spies !
Sit aloft with snoring horn
And hoot the dim eclipsing morn ;
Shroud thy shame in owl's plume,
Punished with a righteous doom ;
Thou, who saw the tiny seed
Tasted in the halls of gloom.
With bite nor sup her lips were wet,
One only grain the maiden ate

Of clear and rubied pomegranate
Taken at her utmost need,
Prompted by an evil fate :
A speck, a grain, and yet of power
To hold her in, sweet prisoned flower.
If she had tasted naught, Zeus said,
She should return from the halls of dread—
And this beast told it—thus and thus—
The trebly-cursed Ascalaphus !

And lo, our mystic service ends
With symbol of the thrice-ploughed field,
A fearful weird that sign portends,
A root immortal, when the seed
Of awful harvests blends
A fallow ripe with mystic deed.
Fearful is the weird.
Drops of moisture quiver
On the pale priest's brow,
And waving like a river
The broken fallow bends,
As the thunder-shock is pealed
O'er the upturned furrows of the field.
Blue the tapers burn
At the spirits overhead ;
The altar candles turn
Pale blue from fiery red.
We feel them at the most,
But the flame perceives a ghost
And flickers dim with dread.
The pure flame quails to hear
The waft of the floating dead,
Which cannot reach our ear.
Extinguish now all light ;
Pray fervently each one.
Ye have known a strange delight,
Ye are wise in love of might ;
Ye see beyond the sight
Of a world of fleeting night.
Our mysteries are done.

CARPE DIEM

THE year flows on in bloom
To make lush Autumn room,
Time takes his mother by the hand to go ;
The little rippling Hours
Push tender feet in flowers,
And Amor, leaning film-eyed on his bow,

Hears the good rain alive
Tinkling and humming drive
The molten summer, petal, bloom and seed.
He lays the peony by ;
Her core of pride is dry,
And black her flaming heart as any weed.

Ah ! in no other wise
The yearning swallow cries :
"Sun-land out yonder, I am weak to go,
My plumes are hardly set,
I am a nestling yet,
And, lo ! I scent on northern hills the snow."

Where chiefly woods have laid
Their arms of twisted shade,
Thy footsteps falter in a depth of leaves ;
Thine eyes are very gray,
Thy raiment dim as they
Who stand afar in mist on leaden eves.

Among the wine-deep whin,
Where red-wings fluster in,
She sits among the larches that I know,
Crumbling in each wan hand
A heath-spike's bells like sand,
Smiling a little, but her lips are slow.

My lady waits me there,
A wilful maid right fair,
Not glad to see or glad to let me stay.
She knows not her sweet mind,
Nor kind nor yet unkind,
A little sorry if I kept away.

THE WAKING SKYLARK

LARK of May, alert and gay,
Why dost thou sing so loud,
To steep thy wings in the golden ray,
And bathe them in the beaming cloud?
Flash to the zenith of burning day,
Burn to the under-world laid gray,
Veiled in a vapour shroud,
Till thy song, till thy song is shed.

Bird with throat and note of gold,
Sweet as a song in dream
Thy voice ascends, an anthem rolled
To Love who sits supreme.
What bird like thee of mortal mould
Such passion to the sunset told,
Till she blushed with a rosier beam,
As thy song, as thy song was shed?

Soar and sing, soar and sing,
Fade in the blue from sight.
The sky-dew quivers on thy wing,
Thou quailest with delight
To sail so near the strong sun's ring
While the rushing wheels of his chariot sting
The clouds to a rosier light
As thy song, as thy song is shed.

August 30th, 1895.

AN OLD MAN'S CONSOLATION

FAILURE I know is poison to the young.
My lad, I share your sorrows ; in my day
I've suffered much, and mastered more like these.
You see that I am old, but I am wise
In that peculiar wisdom, cheaply held,
To take the common incidents of life
At proper estimate, not overmuch
Exalted with the good, nor dashed with ill.

My days have borne no fruit as men account
The good of life, success, emoluments,
Respect in public print, and to be noised
In feeble mouths, the bubble god of the hour.
I have not even gather'd store of coin
To make these few declining years of mine
Repay the watching of my hungry heirs,
Or justify the generous hopes of those
That knew me at my best : poor have I been
Always, but never quite at starving point.
I have not blinded nature from my heart,
Refusing to the common fields and clouds
Their excellence of glory. Not in vain
For me the process of the months resumed
The cyclic renovation of their powers ;
And every flower that feeds on English air
In wilding pomp is my familiar friend ;
Familiar, too, the voice of every bird,
In summer's guarded greens and sounding dales.
I know not these things as prim science knows :
I never read a pompous monograph
To drowsy benches, and my naked name
Provokes not half the jumbled alphabet
To jostle in its wake upon the page
Of scientific records. I have learned
To praise the simple things before my feet.
The birds and trees and herbs and animals
Are incidents enough, and each a world
Of large experience ; I have lived with these.
Oft with a townward thought on summer morns,
When all the birds are round and misted lengths
Of branchy undulation, zone on zone,
I leave in spirit the divine excess
Of nature for the discord and the steam
Of yonder seething city, picture there
Its visible nature bounded to a strip
Of zenith sky, some lean and wisping cloud.
Thence shuddering back I find the scent of fields,
And comprehend my full prosperity.
Ambition stings us in the narrow streets
To push and envy for the public prize.
Upon the mountain we forget ourselves
To greatness where no meaner thoughts intrude.

You are a boy to me. When I was young
I too had dreams, as we must all have dreams

Of making notable this microcosm
 Of self above the level of our peers :
 Such self-opinion chiefly fault and bane
 Of school-day reputation, where I slaved
 When abler men were fallow till their time,
 And where the trick of memory reaped me praise,
 That very essence of a school success,
 In after life a mere accessory
 To power of combination and the rare
 And ruling gift, originality.

I found my level soon. Be witness, Heaven,
 How bitter this reaction, when the boy
 Beheld his crumbled idols and awoke
 To scorn himself as much below his powers
 As he was puffed erewhile This was not long.
 There is a strong and natural health bestowed
 On youth, prevailing over shocks and falls,
 Beyond the reach of morbid taint or touch
 Of vicious system, still a healthful core.
 I righted swiftly, chose my life with heed
 And lived it with contentment and delight,
 Measuring still my wishes by the power
 To make them deed, contented to resign
 The fruit beyond my reaching. I have found
 As sweet a flavour where before my feet
 Some modest berry hardly clears the soil.

SORROW INVINCIBLE

GRAY Morn with a tear in her eye,
 Dim Night with a veil behind,
 Soar on the rack of the billowy sky,
 Float on the track of the rolling wind.

The Morn with her refluent hair,
 The Night with her lustrous train,
 Stand on the threshold, each of them fair—
 She will come, she will come again.

For the beautiful wood-leaves are shed
 And Angels have folded each wing—
 So deep is her sleep that I fear she is dead :
 My Rose might have waited for spring.

Slow, Roses, unrivet your buds,
Ye drowsy great Angels arise !
But I weep, but I weep, for I never saw sleep
So heavy on any one's eyes.

Could I only abundantly weep :
My tear-drops are stinted and slow,
I am mazed, I am dazed with the sight of this thing,
The dread which I perfectly know.

Bright and light as a mystical bow,
Over seas a great iris expands,—
But I think I can certainly show
That the colour is gone from her hands.

She may sleep thro' it all, if she choose :
I shall see her again as I did,
They were cruel to drive in their screws,
They were foolish to fasten the lid.

I shall have her up out of the grass
Live and clean here in front of you all.
You are wrong ; I am right : she shall pass
To her chair and her work in the hall,

With a glad little serious sigh,
When the boys at her apron cling :
Perfectly quiet and joyfully
Righting the child's collar string :

Setting the cradle to swing
With a tender light touch of her feet :
Taking her knitting—no phantom thing—
But a pale mother, earthborn and sweet.

I know she must yearn to be back,
Too young are these children she leaves :
She will come, she will come tho' the stars are dumb
And the dust to her eyelids cleaves.

For I saw her in moonlight gray,
Veiled round with a crescent of light ;
A ray at her hand, from her hand came a ray
Like a wave on a starry night.

THE HEDGE

I saw her again, near a wall
 With peach blossoms. Hatefully June
 Burnt on the brick, and the paths were sick
 In the drought of the furnace noon.

I saw her as plain as my hand :
 And still thro' her form, clear as glass,
 I never could quite understand
 How the sunbeams managed to pass.

Or how in that garden I gazed
 Beyond her, to where on a bush
 A small robin sat unamazed,
 And swelled out his notes like a thrush.

I shall see her again, when my head
 Snaps sudden in death at one blow,
 You won't keep me then in this bed,
 Out of window my spirit will go.

Over seas, over seas to my Sweet,
 Out into the great dawn there,
 There her I shall certainly meet ;
 Get the children up quick round my chair !

Very soon I shall give you the slip,—
 Put close their small palms into mine,
 Raise them up, one by one, to my lip :—
 Day breaks in a sphere red as wine.

God lives in that river of light.
 She sits on the sward where it springs,
 Certainly sits. She is waiting to-night.
 My dove, I soon shall gain my wings.

THE HEDGE

• THERE is a hedge, where round deep ivy root
 The wren creeps darkling in her covert shy ;
 The dunnock trills a hesitating flute,
 And bramble-berries lure the burnished fly.

On either side in rough disorder hang
Long straws and ears torn from the brushing wain,
And the strong red thorned roses fix their fang
And toll, as gleaners toll, the passing grain.

There bindweed lilies cupped in roseate dew,
And bryony's polished leaves tuft vine-like fruit,
And purple-stemmed the honeysuckle grew,
With intertwined amatory shoot.

And here the dragon-fly in glory is
Moving in mailed array a burning star,
And like a white-veiled nun the clematis
Peeps on the world behind her cloister bar.

And here are privet blossoms for the bees.
And many a poised enamelled butterfly
Comes to my hedge and sips the dew at ease,
Kissing the faces of the flowers thereby.

There, coarse and rank, the furrowy kexes spired,
And wild hop curved in many a gay festoon,
And marestail in all nosegays undesired
Jostled the musk-rose, summer's sweetest boon.

Now gaze across the arum's fiery head,
Which lights the inner hedge up like a torch,
And lo, behold, not fifty yards ahead,
A gabled cottage with a bowery porch.

And here I feed on prospect fairer far
Than sight of flower or bird or any tree,
And here I watch the rising of that star
Whose ray is more than Hesperus to me.

The drifted petals of cape jessamine
Perfume the entrance with their falling shower,
While high in air the crowded rose divine
Around that threshold weaves a royal bower.

Within the porch and shadowed from the heat,
In wicker cage a blackbird pipes his song,
Sighs for the dewy woods expanded sweet
And trills the rapture of his captive wrong.

AT HEAVEN'S GATE

A spinning wheel beside the doorway stands ;
 Some one will come and turn it by and bye,
 And twist the slender thread with fairy hands,
 And sit and sing, or sit and heave a sigh.

She weaves me days of smile and nights of tear,
 She winds me love and she unwinds despair,
 She seems like Fortune, bending o'er her sphere,
 As pitiless as Fortune and as fair.

She weaves a wondrous web about my soul,
 Until her wheel goes round, I watch and wait,
 For yonder spinning maiden must control
 The thread of my existence like a Fate.

August 30th, 1895.

AT HEAVEN'S GATE

THE last of all the starry flock,
 Red Phosphor fades in amber skies,
 Hoarse in the farmstead crows the cock,
 Harsh from the glen the owl replies.

Lovely and dim the star of morn,
 A sphere of rayless ruby glows :
 Until the Day divine is born
 On cloudy bed of tinselled rose.

When long-divided zones of pearl
 Announce the silken steps of Day,
 I wake before the silent merle,
 I waken and I soar away.

The waves of heaven with cloudy crest
 Come rippling eastward like a tide ;
 No longer in my moss-lined nest
 The minstrel bird of heaven will bide.

'Tis meet and right my lofty lyre
 Shall greet Apollo's orient rays :
 That I ascend, as stars retire,
 And soaring trill my hymn of praise ;

That first of nature's wakening choir,
Sweet incense to the Lord I bring :
That my devotion wafts me higher
Than clouds which tire an eagle's wing.

The angel of the unrisen morn,
The herald bird with note of fire :
Within whose fervid breast are born
The longings of a world desire,

The pæan to the mighty power
Pervading heaven, pervading earth :
At whose command the genial hour
Breaks iris-tinted in its mirth.

Then I become a morning psalm,
And carol, where are never heard
In solitudes of astral calm
The twitter of a groundling bird.

Where heaven is near I sing alone ;
For other feeble warbling throats
Fail far below my seraph zone,
Nor dare intrude their earthborn notes.

Let Philomel's harmonious breath
Ring out her prelude of despair,
Can tales of turbid love and death
Pollute that pure and crystal air?

Let the false cuckoo tell the vale
His double-noted name unblest ;
Let greedy starlings rate and rail,
And jackdaws bicker round their nest.

Let robins in malignant strife
Pipe triumph o'er a rival slain,
The red-breast hypocrites, whose life
Is sequel to the deeds of Cain.

From Thames to Nile let swallows cross,
Let petrels sing the dirge of wrecks.
I envy not the ringdove's gloss
Nor burnish of their tinselled necks.

A SONG OF DESPAIR

I envy not the feather-eyes,
When Juno's fowl her train expands ;
Nor when the halcyon's rainbow dyes
Recall some bird of tropic lands.

I have no beauty : wing and breast
Are dim, suffused with speckled greys ;
A homely bird : yet from my nest
Ascends a strain of regal praise.

I am the clarion of the morn :
Between the clouds I fade from sight.
The mountains hear my elfin horn ;
I, singing, melt away in light.

I am all music, throat and breast,
And music from my trembling wing
Is shaken, as I poise at rest :
Soaring I never cease to sing.

I throb with full excess of song,
I quiver in melodious pain ;
And, as I flutter, sweet and strong
My strain descends in golden rain.

Mine is the glory of the praise
That does not seek itself to bless,
And mine the meed of blameless days,
Which heaven bends o'er with dove caress.

Mine is the soaring life afar,
Which, self-forgetting, heaven endears ;
Mine is the radiance of the star,
And mine the music of the spheres.

September 29th, 1895.

A SONG OF DESPAIR

THE earth is dust, dust, dust,
Heaven is but empty air,
Faith falters in distrust,
The throne of God is bare.

The saint has worshipped wind,
The seer has seen a lie.
The round globe deaf and blind
Rolls on eternally.

The priests in golden domes
With blood and fire entreat
The hand that never comes,
The long-delaying feet.

As feeble bells of foam,
The creeds are cracked and lost,
Like clouds without a home,
Like waves without a coast.

The foolish peoples tease
Fate—Nature—what you will.
Suns roll and moons decrease,
And men are evil still.

Who sins, by Nature sins,
The pure by birth are so.
The game Death always wins,
Tho' we play high or low.

The heart is nerve and flesh,
The brain a mere machine.
Some slave in sensual mesh,
Some virtue saves serene.

The lecher and the saint
One equal dust awaits ;
The same sepulchral taint,
The same tremendous Fates.

Whether thou diest at peace,
Slain in a noble cause :
Or, like this gutter, cease
Stabbed in some tavern brawl ;

Be thou a man of jest,
Thy mirth must soon be done ;
The threshold of thy west
Saves but an hour of sun ;

A SONG OF DESPAIR

Be thou a toper brave,
Who finds the vine juice good,
Who trolls a ribald stave
To jog his frozen blood.

Be thou some narrow soul
Who grubs in sordid pelf,
And lives merely to roll
More bags upon the shelf.

As warden of the church,
Thy farmyard corner sway ;
And from thy village perch
Proclaim the time of day.

And thou the meanest thing
Who draweth human breath ;
Whose mildewed features cling
To a skull-like mask of death,

Art thou some radiant queen,
Child of a golden clime,
Too lovely to be seen,
The rosebud of her time?

Come, end this comic thing :
Down bid the curtain float.
Shift thyself, pasteboard king,
And peel thy spangled coat.

When Death as reaper mows,
A varied swath he seeks,
He garners in the rose,
He gathers up the leeks.

The burdock harsh and hard,
The hemlock's spotted breast,
Narcissus of the bard,
The lily's plummy crest,—

He rolls them in one sheaf,
Where the idle tares are curled
Round the stem and ear and leaf,
Whose grain sustains the world.

We hear his hand is Love,
 And hold his rod benign ;
 We seek in heaven above,
 And in the deep a sign.

Ascend thy bleak black tower,
 Blind watchman, blear and gray,
 And search the coming hour
 That wings from far away.

The signals of the night
 Are dim with haze and dread :
 Dull shapes perplex the sight,
 Pale phantoms of the dead.

What hope, when for reply
 No sound his warden hears,
 No cry, save his own cry,
 No drip, save his own tears ?

They sent him up to hail
 The laggard moonbeam back :
 He sees the vulture sail
 Grim on the lurid track.

He finds no hint of morn,
 But fears that on the plain
 The royal flag is torn,
 The gallant trooper slain.

For the winds are rocking loud
 Across the burning heath,
 And yonder fiery cloud
 That mimics dawn is Death.

July 26th, 1894.

LINES TO A LADY-BIRD

COW-LADY, or sweet lady-bird,
 Of thee a song is seldom heard.
 What record of thy humble days
 Almost ignored in poets' lays,

Salutes thy advent? Oversung
Is Philomel by many lyres;
And how the lark to heaven aspires,
Is rumoured with abundant fame,
While dim oblivion wraps thy name.
Hail! then, thou unpresuming thing,
A bright mosaic of the spring,
Enamelled brooch upon the breast
Of the rich-bosomed rose caressed.
Thy wings the balmy zephyrs bear
When woods unfold in vernal air,
When crumpled buds around expand,
Thou lightest on our very hand.
Red as a robin thou dost come,
Confiding, in entreaty dumb.
Who would impede thy harmless track,
Or crush thy wing or burnished back?
'Tis said, thy lighting and thy stay
Bring luck: and few would brush away
The small unbidden crawling guest,
But let thee sheathe thy wings in rest,
And take thy voluntary flight
Uninjured to some flower's delight.
For there is nothing nature through,
Lovely and curious as you:
A little dome-shaped insect round,
With five black dots on a carmine ground.
What art thou? I can hardly tell.
A little tortoise of the dell
With carapace or vaulted shell
Of shining crimson? Or again,
I picture thee, in fancy plain,
A little spotted elfin cow,
Of whose sweet milk a milkmaid fairy
Makes syllabub in Oberon's dairy.
Thou hast a legend-pedigree
That gives thy race a high degree
From the shed blood of Venus sweet,
Thorn-wounded in her pearly feet,
As thro' the dewy woods she went,
Love-lorn, in utter discontent,
Listening afar the echoing horn
Of coy Adonis, in whose scorn
The Love-queen languished, love-forlorn.
He burned to hunt the boar at bay,
And loathed the lover's idle play;

So Venus followed in the chase
 And from her wounded heel a trace
 Of blood-drip tinged the dewy mead,
 And, from the ichor she did bleed,
 From Aphrodite's precious blood,
 Arose the lady-birds, a brood
 As gentle as the hurt of love,
 That gave them birth and parentage
 In legends of the golden age.
 But, coming to our modern day,
 Thee peevish children scare away,
 And speed thy flight with evil rhyme,
 Waving an idle hand meantime,
 To make thee spread thy wings in fear
 With rumours of disaster near,
 And tidings of thy home in flames,
 And all thy burning children's names,
 How all are scorched but Ann alone
 Who safely crept inside a stone ;
 With many an old unlettered fable
 Of churlish lips inhospitable.
 And when these fancies all are past,
 I see thee as thou art at last,
 A welcome sign of genial spring,
 Awaited as a swallow's wing,
 The cuckoo's call, the drone of bee,
 The small gnat's dancing minstrelsy.
 Ere hawthorn buds are sweetly stirred
 I bid thee hail, bright lady-bird !

August 21st, 1895.

THE BALLAD OF LIFE

I RODE out in the morning,
 The spring was in my blood.
 I gave the devil scorning :
 The world was ripe and good.

The throstle cock on every hedge
 Sang madly with delight.
 It was May within and May without,
 And never a thought of night.

THE BALLAD OF LIFE

A fig for Fortune, break her wheel,
And tear the spokes away !
A fig for death by shot or steel,
A fig for hairs of gray !

Let Fortune take or Fortune bring,
Come peace or rolling war,
I follow like an eastern king
The zenith of my star.

Old beldam of a Pagan birth,
To stern oblivion hurled !
For boys are masters of the earth,
And youth directs the world.

The fruit of time is mine, right fair
Shed from a golden horn ;
And fragrant as this hawthorn air
To-morrow will be born.

The girl I wanted long is won :
I have ripe ale in store.
My heart is good and my road is good,
And my horse is swift and sure.

Then ho ! my steed, for the flowery mead,
Where the amber currents run.
I ride, I ride in the royal pride
Of youth and the spring-tide sun.

I carol away in the sweet May day,
I am coming, my rose, to thee ;
In the garden of life a most exquisite flower
Is growing and blowing for me.

Then spur my steed, till his hot flanks bleed,
And rush like a torrent fall ;
Haste to the dove, who is waiting alone,
My love that is truest of all.

And I rode to the bower in a fatal hour ;
As black against the day,
A bitter cloud ran out like a shroud
And the rainbow melted away.

The gates were barred as the gates of hell,
And I heard, by the mass ! I heard
My rival's voice, who strummed on a lute,
And wailed like a love-sick bird.

And when the music ended,
Began the kissing play,
And her happy laughter blended,
As she gave her lips away.

But the torture of their blisses
Burnt me like molten lead,
And that agony of kisses
Brought gray hairs on my head.

I crawled back in the gloaming
In the grip of a giant grief,
Thro' the bitter drench of the driving hail,
And the swirl of the rushing leaf.

The storm-cloud onwards muttering came ;
I saw the fireballs glint.
My gallant horse he went dead lame
On a shard of pointed flint.

Then ho ! my steed, for a land of reed,
Where the banks of Lethe run
In the sickened ray of a waning day
And the gleam of a fading sun.

And I know that clap of thunder
Will sour my home-brewed beer,—
And I wonder, and I wonder
How love could turn so sere.

There is nothing new to say or do,
But to creep to a ditch and die.
There is no truth or faith or ruth
Beneath the barren sky.

Then ho ! my steed, to the dead man's mead,
Where the lying Love is dumb.
Blind Fortune rules in a realm of fools
And the devil's kingdom is come.

THE INVITATION

THE INVITATION

COME, my love, upon the mountains,
Amber day is almost done.
Like the drift of golden fountains
Gleam your ringlets in the sun.

For the pimpernel at even
Half shuts up her crimson eye,
Wide she stared at open heaven,
When the noon fell hot and dry.

At the zenith of their cluster
Bloom three sister flowers of heath,
Veiling hill with wine-deep lustre
In an amethystine wreath.

First, the deep cinereous heather,
Next, the paler heath-bell springs
Nodding cream-rose heads together,
Last, the small-flowered lilac lings.

Here long fields of scarlet clover
With bright breadths of hawthorn blend :
Gently on the enamelled cover
Silver-crystal dew descend.

Swallows hang at eave and gable,
Some in wavering circles drift :
Like a rushing comet sable
Swings the wide-winged screaming swift.

Here are hedges where the hornbeams
Brownly hang all winter long :
Leaves that catch the slanting morn-beams,
Leaves that mask the linnet's song.

Come upon the hills, my darling,
Come where grass is sweet and deep,
We will watch the speckled starling
Perched upon the short-eared sheep.

Here the bents for many a gowan
Or slight harebell shalt thou search :
For thy lips are like the rowan,
And thy arms are like the birch.

Come, love, where the sundew glitters,
Four round leaves of dewy red.
Come, where shrill the skylark twitters
To a throbbing speck o'erhead.

In those hayfields, red with sorrel,
Ox-eye daisies wade abreast :
By that stile we had a quarrel
All about a chaffinch nest.

Under that shock-headed teazel,
Like a ploughman among flowers,
You were startled by a weazel
Crept to shelter from the showers.

See, these hazel nuts I've found them,
Half are green and half are rosed,
With the ragged frill around them
In a triple cluster closed.

There in yonder flowering privet,
While with clasping hands we kissed,
Snap it went, the golden rivet
Off the bracelet at your wrist.

Then we heard the goldfinch whistle
In his coat of gold and red,
Then we watched him tear the thistle
And the knapweed, head by head.

There we saw the tutsan tarnish
Fragrant leaves of metal sheen,
Plump its waxy fruit and varnish
Eggs of coral frilled in green.

Many flowers I brought my treasure,
Blooms I showed my mountain bee
Cones of wild rose, gold-of-pleasure
Butcher's broom, anemone ;

THE DIRGE OF DAY

Wrinkled oaks and plummy bracken,
Milkwort, skull-cap, sweet gale-bush,
Frog-pipe, more than you can reckon,
Cotton grass and flowering rush.

Rosy-stemmed the woodbine's tangle,
Rings of horn-like honied flowers,
Grape-like bryony clusters dangle
From the secret hazel bowers.

There I'll clasp thee like a lover
And my arms around thee spread,
As the dodder wraps the clover
Round with tight-drawn ropes of red.

In my love I cannot waver,
Thou to me art Fate and Doom :
I should die to lose thy favour,
I am constant till the tomb.

If the petrel has no portal
Save the threshold of the foam,
Yet the swallow loves the mortal,
Building nest upon his home.

None the thistledown can follow
In its flight for many miles,
Yet the house-leek, like a swallow,
Settles on the village tiles.

O I am not light and fickle,
None such sweetness could betray ;
Time will weep upon his sickle
When he wrongs thy gold with gray.

August 9th, 1894.

THE DIRGE OF DAY

THIS is the dirge of Day !
She is gone her western way ;
The world sighs after her receding feet.
Wood-echoes mock their beat,

Thin leaves round dozing linnets gently shock.
The languid bells along the sheep-cotes rock,
Just rock, while their meek herds
Move with them, as to words
I seem to hear them say—
Farewell, thou faded Day !

This is the dirge of Day !
On the verge of some sea-bay,
Pale in a canopy of golden rain,
Whose Danæe drops amain
Beat o'er her sleepy face and ardent hair,
Extinct from stress of fiery Phœbus there,
Slain on her bridal bed,
As Semele lay dead,
Scorched thro' with the numerous ray,
So lies, so dies the Day.

Mourn, Ocean, mourn the Day !
Life ends as children's play,
Ephemeral pastime, then enduring sleep.
Sing music of the Deep !
With voice in all thy ridges, mellowing sound,
As the gale moves some branchy mountain ground—
Sing ; moon and star will fade,
And the world's dirge be made,
And heaven will pass away
As the dirge of one fleet Day !

Rain, rain to end the Day !
Ye valley-winds convey
Sad showers along the stony-terraced rills,
Mist-mantles on the hills,
Whose spectral boulders drip with human tears,
Where mossy rocks seemed crushed with crumbling years.
And yonder quarried scaur,
Like some slain swan afar,
Whose shining wings decay
Prone on the porch of Day !

Die out and perish, Day !
We deck thy bier in gray,
With gray-green pine and sad slate-coloured rue,
And tufted rosemary, too ;

There lies her face as wan as winter cloud ;
These glen-leaves are one colour with her shroud,
One colour with her hands
Which, crossed like ivory wands,
Seem folded each to pray.
A dirge, a dirge for Day !

Thus shall we bring thee, Day,
A fair lamenting lay,
And spread pink-berried yew beside thy sleep
And cypress, as we weep,
That bough of mourning nourished on a grave,
And, singing with sad breath our funeral stave,
Say, let each forest thing,
Whose note is sorrowing,
Reed, wave and rocking spray,
Raise with us dirge o'er Day.

What sepulchre hath Day,
And where entomb her clay ?
Deck her in death-array, and lay her down
In wood-earth silver-brown :
And o'er her head beneath the iron sky
Let leaves in amber drifts go rustling by
With drop of chestnut ball,
And ash-keys for a pall,
And boughs that weeping sway
Across the grave of Day !

APOLOGIA

WHY dost thou sing, poor bird of feeble song,
While all the coppice rings with nightingales
And the sweet thrush is vocal in the dales ?
To these the glories of the spring belong.

Thy note is neither clear nor sweet nor strong :
Be silent ; who will hear thy puny wails ?
Thy throat is weak, thy cadence sorely fails ;
Thou dost these more melodious songsters wrong.

Then the poor bird replied,—“The daisy holds
Its right to summer with the lordliest tree,
The spring was made as much for meanest me
As for thy queenly voice, which thrills the wolds,
And random notes of mine may linger on
To cheer the traveller after thou art gone.”

IN SICILY

THE fleecy fragments of a roseleaf cloud,
Parted, unveils the central silver peaks
And steepes with amber all the mountain land,
Where Ætna, spectral with granitic brows,
Impends upon the far-cragged island shores.
There the Trinacrian downs are loveliest ;
Their blue ravines unmatched in pastoral flowers,
There ripen fast the scarlet-fruited globes
Of *Arbutus* distinct along the cliffs.
The headlong brooks festoon their sides with vine,
Tendril and bunch of changing amethyst ;
And in among the rows the vineyard men
Sing in their houses. Under and away,
In channels of the silent shoaling sea
The far Tyrrhenian islets fringe the foam,
And draw the purple of the evening sun
Into their hills, volcanic outlines grand,
That waver in the violet-tinged verge,
Half-cloud, half island, set in mirrored sea,
Where the great changes of the ocean pass.

Why art thou silent, voice of my desire ?
Sweet mountain nymph, more lovely than the dawn,
Whose regal eyes are wondrous like the sea,
Whose face excels all nature's coloured shows,—
As thou art radiant, so be pitiful.
Make firm my doubts with kisses, lest I feel
This mighty dream unreal ; lest the touch
Of thy sweet hand seem but the mock of sleep.
Bend thine eyes, beautiful with all their light,
Full on my face : let thy lips follow them,
Lest I should fear delusion, and awake
Hereafter weeping for a phantom joy.

What have I done to guerdon such a gift?
How shall I rise up worthy of my sweet?
Honour enough for me and my poor lips
To kiss the little broken cistus bud
Which on some flowery slope thy rosy feet
Have bruised and half dispetalled, in the dust.

Why hast thou given me this wealth of joy,
And hast adorned love's burnished altar-sides
With the red splendour of thy sacrifice,
And beaming garlands, fit for passion's brows,
And secrets from the treasures of love?
Thou art as liberal morning in thy gifts,
And I as niggard night, whose empty hands
Absorb thy fragrance and repay my gloom.
In thy beatitude I am but a leaf
Bathed in the new beam of thy radiant eyes.

I am only a dewdrop shaken from the stars
Of thy transcendent glory : a grain of sand
Steeped in an affluent river's fervid roll
Of sheer Pactolian gold, or pure Choaspes,
The drink of Persian kings in jewelled cups.

What have I done to merit love of thine?
Wonder of Eros, this and thus was I :
The dull weak thing, whose instinct at thy face
Drove him to fall in adoration prone.
Before thy beauty, terrible as fire,
His feeble nature faltered as in flame.
Marvel of love, whose empire alters all,
Since thou hast deigned to raise me to thy smile ;
As the moon calls a low and earth-born cloud
To ascend and glisten in her glorious arms,
Till in his vapour all her form is lost ;
But he, who veils her round, glows more and more.

As in a silence of warm air the lark
Sings, in thy love my spirit is content ;
As in a waste of many buds the bee
Is busy with much perfume, till it tire ;
I am broken with the sweetness of my love.
I feel thy spirit brooding in serene
Completeness, deep as ether, pure as dew.
The still hours come and watch us and depart.
At length, as when the glory of a star

Goes out of heaven and leaves the saddened verge
To gray lament and clouds uncrimsoning ;—
Thou dost arise, and in thy leaving me,
Soothest my burning forehead with thy hand.
Or in caress, that runs before farewell,
I watch thee gather back thy heavy curls
Disordered ; leaning in a silent care
To smile, before thy lips are moved to mine ;
Lest I should lose thy smile, as intense light
Is lost if men consider it too near.
So leaning drink my soul into thine own ;
Have thy fond arm about me, and begin
A murmuring breath in whisper, as the talk
Of mated swallows when their nest is laid.
Ah, but to rest with thy sweet serious eyes
Above my slumber, thy smooth cheek on mine :
And let the ringlet flakes efface the day
With clustered ripples from my glowing eyes.
For surely they who love become as gods
Knowing all wisdom ; and thy love shall draw
My faltering soul invested in its power,
Out and beyond this tumult we call Time,
Where the loud fruitless billows heave themselves,
Where the long aimless clouds roll and are lost.
Where all things drift to the dread shadow of gods,
The Cherub Death, whose lips are soft with sleep.

Across the exultant lyre-beat of our love
Intrudes a chord of doom ; a moaning wire ;
Death lays his hushing finger on the notes.
The horrid cadence changes at its close,
And dies away in discord with a wail.
Let the song cease. Ah me, my beautiful,
Let us be very busy with our joy.
While there is light above and the sweet air,
Let us make harvest in the tangled meads
And deep redundant meadows of the May.
Let us be misers of our hours of June.
Let all else fade, I have enough in thee.
Love, let us crown and build his altar well,
The King of Time, Lord of the fleeting day.
Thine eyes, thine eyes are on me, and thy palm
Is wound with mine : thy lucid orbs resume
Old tenderness, and wean me from the thought
Beyond thine arms. Thine instant, love, is more
Than all the deep hereafter, dim with cloud.

What matter if around us every field
 Is sprinkled with immeasurable graves?
 I heed not, if love leave me merely this,
 Only that I may hear thy tender sighs
 And feel thy tears and smiles are all for me.
 While this endures, why should I question more?
 Beautiful dream, whose red Aurora fades,
 Before thy dew dries on the myrtle leaf,
 O perfect vision of love, one little hour,
 Be patient, in thy plenitude abide,
 And till it perish, leave us hand in hand,
 To watch the Tyrian changes of the woods,
 The wave against the vineyard, and the cloud
 That crowns the peak of Ætna like a tower.

July 16th, 1895.

THE SAILING SHIP

THE ship beats up the glittering strait,
 With quivering sail and canvas crowded,
 Where, up behind the haven gate,
 A foreland rises, mist-enshrouded.
 Sail, gallant ship, sail on with stately gliding
 Beyond the mountain mist the storm is tiding,
 Sail on, sail on.

A thousand knots of shifting tide
 By palmy beach and coral meadow,
 Thy keel has flung the spray aside
 In noon-day gleam or midnight shadow.
 Sail, eager ship, I love thee gently gliding,
 Like some bright sea-bird on the ripple riding,
 O sail, sail on.

Thou bearest freight of foreign gold,
 The bales and spices of the stranger;
 For years thy imaged prow has rolled
 In wrestle with the ocean danger.
 From distant hearts, who love, thou bringest tiding,
 Thou bindest land to land o'er ocean gliding,
 Sail safely on.

To haven waft on gentle gale,
And end in port thy travel weary,
Thy cable cast and furl thy sail
In shelter from the storm-wind dreary.
Sail, gallant ship, to haven safely guiding,
Heed not the idle billows round thee chiding,
Sail in, sail on !

August 31st, 1895.

"WHAT SHOULD A MAN DESIRE?"

A CHORUS

WHAT shall a man desire ?
Rule and the stout right arm,
Revenue, limitless honour,
And houses of gear and gold.
Sea-going ships and castles,
Spearmen and herds at his will,
All may be his for a season,
But envy is ever at watch,
And the least of his slaves with a knife
May make him as poor as the dead ;
Who shone like a god in his throne.

What should a man desire ?
To be happy and yet to be hid ;
Days without honour or shame ;
Days without want or wealth.
A life where the strife we endure
Equals our power to achieve.
And fortune to heed, that no act
Angers our despots above :
And caution to guard from our lips
Boast and light word of disdain ;
So us may the dæmon allow,
When the dark hour is ready, and night ;
Beckons, to creep to our graves,
Weary, without having felt
How heavy omnipotent hands,
How dire are the curses of Zeus !

What shall a man desire,
How shall he rule his days,
How shall he keep his name clean
In the turmoil and rust of the years?
Calm he shall reach at, and lose,
And Eros shall bring him unrest,
And arise to him, promising roses,
And bring to him adders and snares,
Covered in baskets of bloom.
But each man believes in his brain,
That sole upon earth he is wise,
That all who have ventured and failed
Are as nothing; he only shall reap
Love without evil and snares;
So his ode hymeneal is sung,
In his halls a new presence begins.
The bride with her low breathing sweet,
And her calm eyes fed with delight,
The still touch of her hand, and the sound
Of her voice like a brooding dove,
Of her word, as it fondles and loves,
In a tone as a wind-wave is stirring
The junipers over the chalkpit,
The box alleys edging the down sward.
For these, which are fleeting delights,
He endures on his shoulders to bear
A yoke which is light a few years,
But heavy and leaden indeed
As the strength of a man goes away,
As the youth of his soul flickers out.
And he wakes by an emberless fire,
Bemoaning the cheat of his dream,
And he sits by the gray barren hearth,
A watcher in jealousy set
At his side, to dismay and expel
Forever the soul of his peace.

What shall a man desire?
I know not. The honour of war.
It is as the west wind catches
A feather and turns it away.
It is as the wild east finds it,
Plays with it, hurries it back.
So honour and death are shaken
In a random destiny's hand
In the urn of the wavering years.

The brave are undone in their rashness,
 The prudent are too little brave,
 These rush in to their ruin,
 These live indeed but in shame.
 To be made by ironical gods,
 Halt, ragged, dim-eyed, broken down
 With illness and age, ere the hour
 Of their youth has in others departed.
 So this is thy glory, O bard,
 Sighing where others rejoice,
 But in thyself a shadow,
 And held for a foolish thing
 By the lover, who learns his love,
 By the warrior, whose conflict is cheered
 By thy verse ; therefore bear and be still.

A FUTURE

Thy love may be the vocal memories
 Of idols overthrown, imperial hours :
 Thy lute may moan perpetual monodies
 Of desecrated bowers.

Thy creed may be to move in solemn shade
 With drooping head, a dream upon an earth
 Of careless creatures—proudly disarray'd
 Of any masking mirth.

Thy rest may be a rest we cannot know—
 Beyond sleek envy's scorn and cant of sneers—
 Pervaded with the secret strength of woe,
 Yet consecrate to tears.

THE POSY OF A WEDDING RING

WELL fare the fluttering hand and gentle brow
 Which this hath linked in everlasting vow.
 And may the maiden promise of this ring
 Till Autumn keep the perfume of its spring.

Few fall the tears to moist the sacred gold,
 Emblem of purer treasure, love untold.
 What tears are given thy share of wedded pain
 Be they the unenduring April rain.
 The ring is fabled there to rest its round
 Where heart is by some nerve to finger bound :
 Nor will thy hand, yet virgin of deceit,
 Lament its clasp until thy winding sheet.

LOVE'S BIRTH

WHEN Love, before whose planet birth,
 The sacred Paphian pinewoods smiled ;
 Then roses spread the forest earth
 And blue-bells gleamed on mountain wild.

The air grew mild : the ocean floor
 Without one crisping ripple lay.
 In calm the breaker lapped the shore,
 Or washed the ledges of the bay.

But, sweet and deep, transcendent rest
 Suffused the violet-tinted sea.
 And in the richly clouded west
 The purple faded silently.

July 25th, 1895.

THE OLD EARL

AN ancient Earl of high renown,
 Lived near the sounding main,
 By fisher town and terraced down,
 And miles of purple plain.

The time-worn castle where he dwelt
 For ages long had stood ;
 As an eagle gray, who waits his prey,
 Above the roaring flood.

And he looked along the water
At e'en and morning prime—
And he heard the breezes waft lay
Lays of the ancient time.

And he looked across the ocean
As each new day went on ;
Till far from sight on the sea-birds flight
His soul would fain begone—

“ In notes of some remembered song
The sea-sound seems to weep.
And buried fears are in my ears,
As I gaze along the deep.

“ The riddles of our life and fate
Flash up from restless waves,
When sun-down red at ocean gate
Descends to western caves.

“ O youth has no returning,
My heart is drear and cold,
My eyes are dim with yearning
For my lost one's locks of gold ! ”

A DIRGE

THE glory of my sleep,
When the mute house is calm,
Are the eyes that I seem to know,
And the hands that once were warm.
Dear eyes they seem to weep,
And hands ye are cold as snow.
For the grave is very deep
And I know not any charm
Can win you out of sleep,
And make the old kiss glow,
The old soft fingers warm ;
My praying brings no balm,
The cold gods see my woe,
But beyond them lies a deep,
Where they own no power to harm,
Where is sleep,
Where is calm ?

A MOTHER'S DIRGE

THE infants of her love surround her urn,
 Year after year with unenduring wreath.
 Can eyes that moisten or can lips that burn
 Bring comfort to the sleeper underneath.

The dim sweet face fades from them, day by day,
 Grief is sincere, but youth and life are strong.
 Time dries the tear from sorrow's cheek away,
 And children's eyes weep nothing very long.

And the pale mother soon shall these forget ;
 Yea, they that clung as children at her breast.
 The shadowy mother of a dim regret
 Out in the lonely grasses of her rest.

All things are broken on the wheels of Fate,
 Sorrow herself is vassal to decay,
 And far beyond the blessed sunset gates,
 The winds wail dirge for those who fade away.

A SKETCH AT ATHENS

SING me a song, my beloved, sing it low,
 When rose-crowned in some marble portico,
 I watch the wondrous clouds that sun-down weaves,
 Still as a green-eyed locust on the leaves.
 The sea-ways are alive with tawny sails,
 The day burns out in faded orange veils.
 A horn of light just frays the corner gray
 Where the cloud opens to receive the day.
 Come to me, my beloved, sing it here ;
 The race of leaves is falling everywhere.
 Here on the marble squares I spread my nest,
 Our feasting couch shall face the ardent west.
 Bring hither nard and vervein, skins of wine,
 Fat icy gourds, 'pomegranates, ivy-twine.
 The violet bud is sweetest in a wreath,
 But mingle in some roses underneath,
 To crown us twain ; as gods in asphodel
 Serene above the fretful moaning swell

Of time and change ; where one dies, and one weds ;
And that great tree of life its foliage sheds
In a perpetual Autumn. O my love,
Let us be glad a little, if above
The lords allow us interval of pain.
Begin, ye smooth white flute-girls your refrain ;
Cease your cicala-chirping and begin ;
Cease dabbling ivory fingers where a skin
Leaks out upon the marble in red rill ;
Ye are petulant, begin then ! And she will
Lead your refrain, my lovely of all loved ;
She comes, as Heré once on Ida moved
To meet her lord. Her bountiful sweet hair
Out-curves the forehead fillet, rippling there,
Along each narrow temple's interspace,
Folding in golden shadow half the face.
Defer thy song, my dove, till I have kissed
Each of thine eyes of sea-blue amethyst.
The lyre is rested on her beating side.
The prelude music rises like a tide ;
Half smiling thro' her choral ode she sighs
With hectic lips and regal languid eyes ;
Then, as the music deepens her face glows,
Her shy luxuriant, indolent repose
Fades in the access of the lyric storm ;
Her arms are rhythmic : her full-fruited form
Is broken in delicious shuddering bends
Till the last chord in sudden silence ends.
Then back she tosses her rich fleece of hair,
And readjusts the tunic fallen where
The bends of milky shoulder intervene,
By the half-hidden bosom of my queen.
Flushed in her blinding tresses disarrayed,
Half the throat shines and half remains in shade
In veils of lucid saffron dim she moves
And rises as the star whom evening loves,
The mellow herald of the unrisen moon,
The viceroy of the sun asleep too soon.
So clothed in robes of floating gold divine,
With lips in laughter fresher than the brine,
My love arises, ripe and clear and new,
Perfect in calm, in motion perfect too.
In gracious curves reclining sudden-wise,
She leans herself above me with great eyes ;
And, winding round me, lithe to the sandal heel,
Tightens her pliant folds, a silver eel ;

Sets at her chin her nestling face whereon
 Glows the red echo of her music done,
 Saying : " I made my song of love indeed,
 But song to Love himself is merely weed,
 As shadow is to light the love we sing
 Is very wan when lips of lovers cling.
 As dream to waking, as the imaged star
 To Hesperus himself, my lyrics are.
 Come let us love and prove it as I say,
 The ripe hour runs, the golden sun grows gray."
 And as her fingers net behind my hair,
 " My lips," she whispers, " are as rosy-rare
 As foam from Aphrodite, when she stood
 Humid and white in Paphian ocean-wood."
 And I respond : " O dainty, in your kiss
 The scent of many myrtle branches is,
 With breeze of ocean, dew, and spices sweet.
 Chill with the marble are your rosy feet,
 That lean against me. Let me hold thee fast,
 As scattered sheep the clouds are reeling past,
 The stars are wheeling in the mellow deep,
 So let the lute-girls sing us both asleep."

THE OREAD

IN fern and foxglove and sweet woodland ways
 I found my Love, beneath the mighty trees
 Of an old forest. In an ambrosial breeze
 Lovely, I saw her come. The level rays
 Shadowed the trembling oakleaves o'er her face.
 I could have fallen prone upon my knees
 In adoration ; as the bard, who sees
 An Oread in the sweet Ionian lays.

We rested on the moss in solitude.
 The world stood still in wonder at that hour.
 Doves wailed afar and nearer droned the bee.
 And close a chaffinch chattered to its brood,
 And flowers were round my sweet, herself a flower,
 As weeping there she gave herself to me.

June 26th, 1894.

COWSLIP

FAIR cowslip, in the front of May,
When woods are freshly green,
Ere one wild rose is seen ;
Yet listen to the royal lay
 To cheer, the clime.
And in the thorny brake is heard
The plaining of the classic bird,
 The bird of rhyme.

An ampler verdure June dilates,
And mountain high the chestnut tree
Rears its heaped blossoms in a sea
Of flowers, each tinged with central red,
 With cream-white round.
And labyrinths, where odour showers,
And bees sink fathoms deep in flowers,
 And perfumed sound.

A SONG OF THE ROLLING WIND

A SONG of the fields and a song of the woods,
And a song of the rolling gale ;
A song for my love, and my false, false love,
To the tune of the crackling hail
 In the teeth of the roaring wind.

A song of the clouds and the fallow face,
Where the wrestling leaves come down,
Of the heart that is changed, and the voice that is gone,
And the woodland withered brown
 In the drift of the raving wind.

A song for me, and a song for thee,
And never a love between,
And the cold clay-couch of the patient dead
By the yew tree's inky green,
 In the teeth of the rolling wind.

A song for the end of our childish love,
 And a sigh for the half-ebbed bowl.
 A laugh of scorn for the half dead lees,
 And for love that has reached no goal,
 In the breath of the parching wind.

A smile of tears that love should cease,
 Like a child that is tired of play.
 And a bitter sneer at the wretched heart,
 That shifts as the aspen spray
 In the beat of the blustering wind.

What song have I, whose lips are pale,
 What voice whose eyes are brine?
 God made a dream and made a lie
 To ape Love's glow divine,
 In the howl of the bitter wind.

A song, a song, and get thee gone
 For the night runs down with rain
 My throat is dry, and my lute is broke,
 And I never shall love again,
 In the rush of the roaring wind.

L'ENVOI

THOU askest overmuch of song to bid its trammelled
 numbers
 Arouse from graves long undisturbed, dead memories that
 have lain,—
 To bid it with exorcist spell break through their hallowed
 slumbers,
 And raise a crowd of spectres thou shalt never still again.

Thou askest for those lays to which thine ear once loved to
 listen,
 Ah me ! the harp is all unstrung ! it's golden tones are fled
 No more the pearl-drop at its sound in sympathy shall
 glisten
 Upon thine eyelash, telling more than ever words have
 said.

Those strains that sank into our ears, those words our hearts
have noted !

Ah me, the harp is broken, all its golden chords unstrung !
There was a time its melody our tranced souls has floated

On amber streams, by emerald meads—that dreamland
of the young.

CONCLUSION

'Tis gone, the land of dreams ! a greyer sky
Has leadened all the beaming sunrise zone ;
The hard world wakes in cold reality,
Romance hath still'd her music, touch and tone.

It was a land of heroes, and of streams
Rolling gigantic music ; dreadful heights
Beetled beneath the thunder clouds, with gleams
Of a wild sunset spread in flying lights.

Or emerald valleys, myrtle growths embayed,
Whereby the masted streamers fluttering ride,
Where wakeful fountains rippled on, nor stayed
The night-long murmur of their lispings tide.

The maiden waits by some enchanted spring :
His charger watches by a bleeding knight :
The fairy princess leads her elves a ring :
The ogre crashes down the pinewood's height.

Gone ? all shall go, the fable and the truth ;
Ambrosial glimpses of an antique day,
Lost, as the love dream of a withered youth
In wintry eyes where charmed laughter lay.

THE END

A Few Press Opinions upon the Poetry of Lord De Tabley

PHILOCTETES ; A Metrical Drama, after the Antique

"This is a fine poem, beautiful in detail, powerful as a whole; leaving the same sort of impression of sad majesty upon us as many of the finest Greek dramas themselves; combining the self-restrained and subdued passion of the antique style, with here and there a touch of that luxuriance of conception, and everywhere that wider range of emotions and deeper love of natural beauty, characteristic of the modern. To whose pen we owe it does not appear to be known. It might have been taken for Mr. Matthew Arnold's but for a less supremely intellectual, a profounder ethical and moral essence than it usually pleases him to embody: and 'Philoctetes' is certainly as far above 'Merope' in success of execution as Mr. Arnold's finest poems are above his poorest."—*The Spectator*, June 30, 1866.

"In careful structure of plot, in classic chasteness of style and language, in nice and exact interweaving of part with part, in finish and completeness of the whole, 'Philoctetes' is worthy—and that is saying much—to be named in the same day with 'Atalanta in Calydon,' although the latter is entitled to a marked precedence. . . . Passing from the drift and scope of this new 'Philoctetes' to its poetry, one is struck by abundant tokens of grace and refinement, and discerns a fancy fed on loving study of the ancient classics. The author has plied the 'exemplaria Græca' to good purpose, and has learnt from them to a creditable extent that completeness in itself of each thought, image, and description which is to be found in a Greek poet's composition. . . . The classical field is open and unrifled. Let the author pursue his researches amongst its treasures, and go on to delight his generation with fresh studies 'from the antique' as truthfully conceived as his 'Philoctetes.'"—*The Saturday Review*, August 18, 1866.

"That desolate old Greek idea of the hopeless misery of man is clothed by our anonymous poet in language of great beauty and power."—*London Review*, July 28, 1866.

"Every abatement, however, being made, 'Philoctetes' is undoubtedly the work of a poetical mind, and may be read with enjoyment. With pains and matured art, the writer may produce what will endure."—*The Athenæum*, May 26, 1866.

"There is fine poetry in 'Philoctetes,' but it is the song of despair."—*The Reader*, May 19, 1866.

"An unknown writer who chooses as the subject of a 'metrical drama, after the antique,' the sufferings and deliverance of Philoctetes, and so challenges comparison with all but the noblest of the extant works of Sophocles enters on a task of no common magnitude. . . . We may add to that plea that the enterprise, bold as it undoubtedly was, has issued not in failure but in success. The modern 'Philoctetes' will be read with pleasure by those who have loved and admired the

old. It deserves to the full as high a place in the literature of our time as Mr. Arnold's 'Merope,' or Mr. Swinburne's 'Atalanta in Calydon.'"—*Contemporary Review*, June, 1866.

REHEARSALS ; A Book of Verses

"The author has found his gift, and its presence is visible more or less in every piece on which he has now tried his hand. This gift we take to be a compound of rich fancy and imagination, fostered by a keen and loving insight of nature, and kept in check by a sustained and observant study of the antique models which, better than any later examples, supply lessons of form and chasteness to modern verse-writers. In 'Rehearsals' the impress of this may be traced throughout ; on some of the poems it is so deeply and successfully set that, unless the taste for poetry is extinct, they cannot fail to survive the ephemeral notice which may be drawn to them by magazines and reviews, and to hold their own amidst those samples of the English muse of the nineteenth century which are worthy to live."—*Saturday Review*, December 10, 1870.

"Mr. Warren, whom we may be allowed to congratulate on claiming in his own person the honours which he has won under the name of 'William Lancaster,' expresses with uncommon energy and passion the spirit of 'revolt' which is so common among our young poets, we may say, among our young thinkers. . . . Mr. Warren has in no small measure the gifts of the poet, but we cannot hope or even wish for him the highest success till he can come to believe in light."—*Spectator*, February 4, 1871.

"'Rehearsals' not merely justifies all the praises which have been bestowed upon the previous poems, but shows that Mr. Warren is capable of still greater achievements. His present volume reveals a sustained power of thought, a ripeness of judgment, and an artistic beauty, for which we were quite unprepared."—*Westminster Review*, January, 1871.

"Mr. Warren has an exquisite ear ; and his verse dwells on the ear of the reader with a whisper as of evening wind stealing through woodbine, always too with a shade of melancholy in its sweetness. What could be tenderer, sweeter, more rapt in self-nursed despair than this from 'The Children of the Gods'? . . . 'Pandora' is an exquisite restoration. It is instinct with the Greek spirit. The severe simplicity and beauty of the old life speaks through the swell of the rhythm, which pulses steady and calm, like the waves of a summer sea round rocks."—*Nonconformist*, December 14, 1870.

"We cannot help recognising in 'Rehearsals' the mature work of a ripe poet. The promise of his 'Philoctetes' and 'Orestes' made us sure that, in the course of a few years, their author would produce poetry worthy to take its place amidst the more memorable out-pouring of contemporary verse-weavers."—*Literary Churchman*, January 5, 1871.

"Mr. Warren has a quick eye and ear for the sights and sounds of external nature ; and a warm, sympathizing heart with the most tragic as well as the most tender emotions of human nature. His genius takes many forms, and is equally well sustained in its multifiform versatility. His chief poems in this collection are all written on subjects as different and as distinct in their character as can well be imagined,

and yet they are all remarkable for high finish, vigour, and poetical insight. . . . Of all the pieces in the volume, we give the palm of excellence to 'Expostulation,' which is a passionate appeal of the God of Israel to the people who have forsaken him. We have space to quote only a few lines of this very beautiful poem."—*The Graphic*, February 18, 1871.

"Mr. Warren's 'Rehearsals' consists of forty-four poems, all of them short, many terse almost to abruptness. Nevertheless, each poem is pleasant to read, for they are all carefully composed and well put together. . . . 'An Ode' is one of the finest poems in 'Rehearsals.' The following as the three closing stanzas of it. . . . A land of a rest and sleep is here so powerfully shown to be the goal for which alone it is wise to long. . . . It ('The Prodigal Son') is a poem of only three verses, but it is powerful in its simplicity and terseness. With it we may close this short review of Mr. Warren's book, but not without expressing a hope that before long he will give us more of his work, which, we have fair grounds for hoping, will fulfil the promise he has undoubtedly shown in these poems and in 'Philoctetes.'"—*Scotsman*, May 25, 1871.

"His (the author's) descriptions of nature are remarkably faithful, and there is great finish in all that he writes."—*Weekly Review*, March 25, 1871.

"We have already said that the music of the verse is often exceedingly charming, and without close study in several of the poems, admiration of the technical skill of the artist might induce the reader to overlook the strength of the thought so elegantly and tersely expressed."—*Manchester Examiner and Times*, March 22, 1871.

"There is no mistake whatever about the genius and ability of Mr. Warren. . . . It is possible that the introduction which we propose to give our readers to this remarkably fine volume may as well begin with this horribly beautiful poem. (The Strange Parable) . . . If Mr. Warren write a little slower he will leave marks behind him."—*Daily Review*, December 19, 1870.

"So long as poems like this can be written in the nineteenth century, so long may we say that the warmth and spirit of the old classic religion did not expire with Goethe. . . . The most biting sarcasm, and the tenderest feeling, the keenest sensibility to natural beauty, the utmost freedom from coarse sensuousness, the deepest inspiration and the highest aspiration, the saddest undertone and the sweetest melody, all lie between the covers of this book."—*The Illustrated Review*, 1870.

ORESTES; a Metrical Drama

"In 'Orestes,' he (the author) has at least proved himself capable of producing an admirable piece of English composition. Some of the blank verse in this poem is almost Shakespearian in its forcible expression, in its power of clearly realising the subtleties of the thought of which it is the vehicle, in its freedom from affectation, in its freedom from weakness. . . . When we meet such poetry as this book contains, the temptation to quote is irresistible."—*London Review*, July 20.

"The present work, like its predecessor, 'Philoctetes,' contains many passages, especially in the choruses, the force and beauty of which are not to be denied. . . . Viewed merely as a dramatic poem, it often

demands high praise for the force of its dialogue, and for the fervid spirit and beauty of description evinced in the choruses. There is the true throb of passion in the reproaches which Orestes addresses to his mother, whom he still believes guilty of seeking his life."—*Athenæum*, July 27, 1867.

"Altogether, this 'Orestes' is a fine conception, powerfully wrought out and calculated, unless we greatly err, to sustain its author's well-won place among the foremost imitators of the ancient drama."—*Contemporary Review*, October, 1867.

SEARCHING THE NET

"Mr. Warren has again come before us with a clear and highly polished style, and with imaginative powers which throw a steady splendour on the details of his composition. He has given proofs of a poet's strength. There is a clear-sightedness, candour, and depth of human feeling in this author which may make the cautious study of his genius as instructive as it will be engaging."—*The Pall Mall Gazette*, July 31, 1873.

"The copious rhetoric, always fluent and sometimes eloquent, and rich with elaborate imagery, is of no common kind. The love of nature and power of painting it, a command of richly adorned language, and no inconsiderable power of versification are gifts which Mr. Warren shows himself to possess."—*The Spectator*, January 17, 1874.

"Worthy of the ripe scholarship and fine poetic faculty of 'Philoctetes.'"—*Echo*.

"He has imbibed the spirit of the old Greek poets. He is also a master of rhythmical effect."—*The English Independent*, July 3, 1873.

"We have too much faith in the judgment and taste of the public to believe that such exquisite poems are destined to be consigned to obscurity."—*The Manchester Examiner*, July 11, 1873.

POEMS: DRAMATIC AND LYRICAL

"There is the ring of true poetry in Lord De Tabley's verses, together with fine classical feeling and rare mastery of metrical expression."—*The Times*.

"A poet who is pre-eminently a scholar, and who has been winning a place in English literature by slow degrees for thirty years past."—*The Saturday Review*.

"This volume, as a whole, will delight lovers of poetry and confirm its author's reputation."—*Scotsman*.

"The lyrical element in the volume is particularly sweet and spontaneous. 'The 'invocation' strikes a very high and impressive note, as also the beautiful 'Ode to a Star.'"—*The Realm*.

"We have not for a long time seen a volume of verse in which even accomplishment of form was united to such a real and constant presence of the poetic spirit."—*The Manchester Guardian*.

"A good deal of poetry that has distinctly the ring of true metal."—*The Morning Post*.

"'The Death of Phaethon' is one of the very best of Lord De Tabley's classical poems."—*The Star*.

"The treatment of the old divine myth is full of a heightened poetic feeling."—*The Daily Chronicle*.

"Some of the love-verses in this volume are very charming. Everywhere, the style is, though concentrated, clear."—*The Globe*.

"The author handles the old nature-myth very deftly, and with true poetic feeling."—*The Liverpool Mercury*.

"It is not too much to say that the whole poem, which is one of considerable length, maintains as high an elevation as it attained in the extract we have quoted."—*Yorkshire Herald*.

"Lord De Tabley's second series of 'Poems, Dramatic and Lyrical,' should win him many friends."—*The Sketch*.

"All these (Phaethon, Circe, Hellas) contain beautiful passages."—*The Glasgow Herald*.

"This volume and the preceding one, apart from any other, should assure Lord De Tabley a permanent place in poetical literature."—*The Newsagent*.

ORPHEUS IN THRACE

"The process of discrimination which has dissipated the claims of so much of the poetry of the last ten years has left his strenuous and dignified talent—we will not say, unaffected, but enhanced. The intensity of his imagery, the sombre but noble majesty of his mind, the wonderful felicity of the scattered jewels of phrase and note—these qualities of high workmanship and susceptible imagination are of a fibre that is not exhausted by six, or sixty, years of critical analysis. 'Orpheus in Thrace' contains work that will rank, not only with his own best, but among the best of his day."—*The Daily Chronicle*, January 1, 1902.

"In these poems we have all the qualities that first assured for Lord De Tabley his place among poets, but matured and perfected. Here are the melodiousness, the luxuriant fancy, and the tenderest concern with the beauties of nature—the poet's concern which is equally for things small and great."—*The Manchester Courier*, March 19, 1902.

"We feel assurance that much that he has written will be preserved among the best of our literature."—*The Daily News*, January 9, 1902.

"That a voice so sweet and at the same time so austere will retain a definite and positive seat of honour in our later English choir cannot, we think, be doubted by any competent critic."—*The Inverness Courier*, December 27, 1901.



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